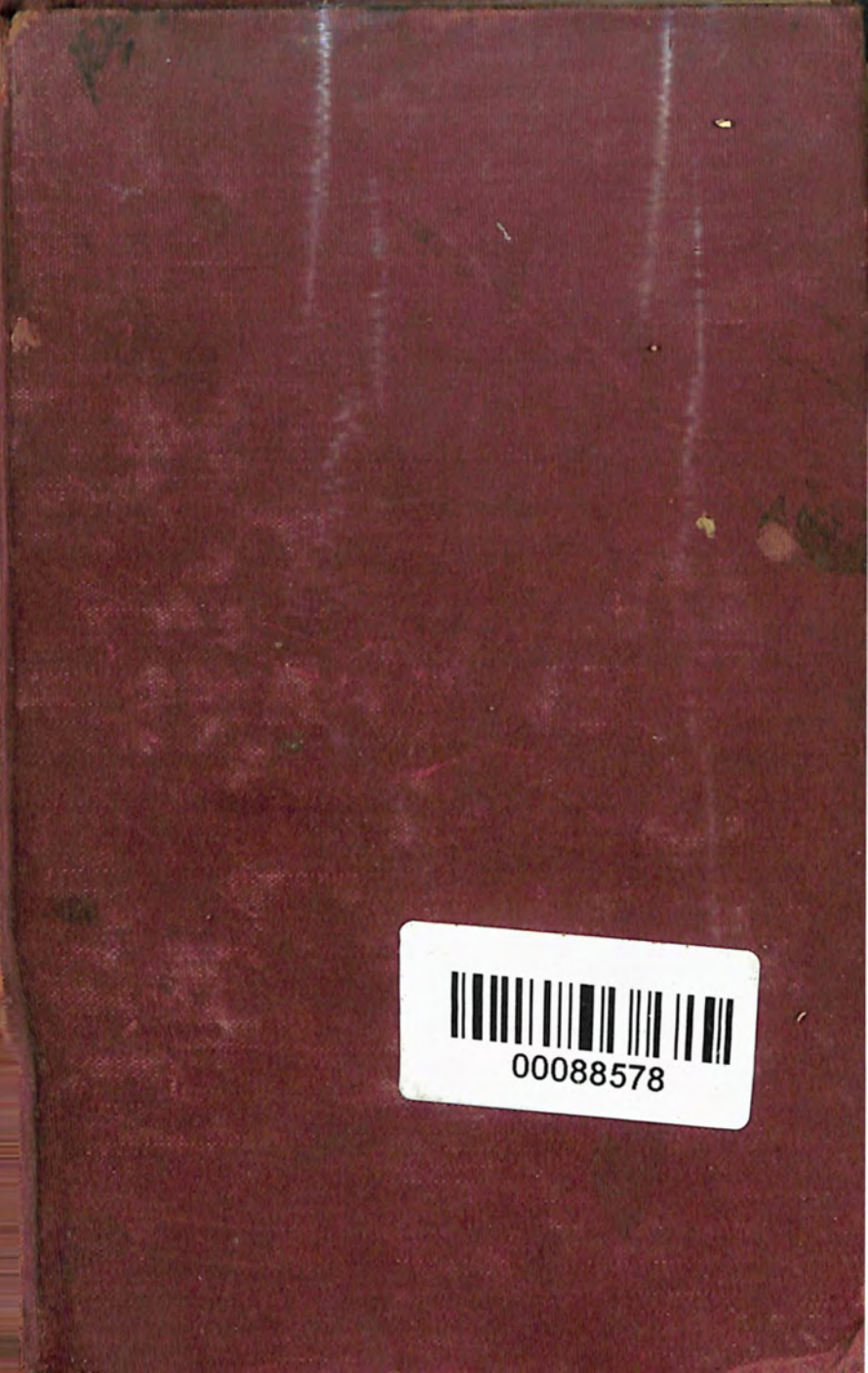
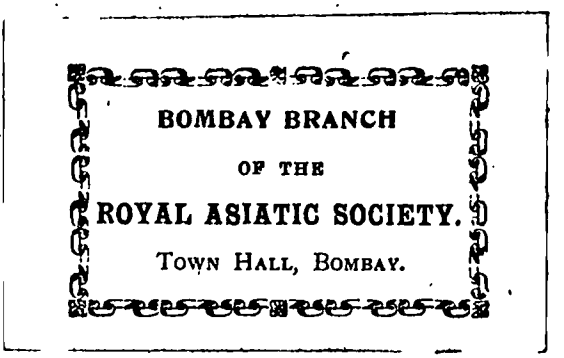

00088578



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 10 March, 2016

G. BARNARD, DELT.

M & N. HANHART, LITH.

A LADY'S TOUR

ROUND

MONTE ROSA;

88578

WITH

Visits to the Italian Valleys

OF

ANZASCA, MASTALONE, CAMASCO, SESIA, LYS, CHALLANT, AOSTA, AND COGNE.

IN A SERIES OF EXCURSIONS IN THE YEARS 1850-56-58.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, AND ROBERTS.
1859.

914.5

00088578

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET,
AND CHARING CROSS.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

The principal characteristics of Monte Rosa: 1. Its height; 2. The number of its peaks; 3. Its geological formation; 4. Its inhabitants of German and Italian origin; 5. The difference of vegetation on the Swiss and Italian sides — Advice on a Lady's dress and equipments for the Alps — Side-saddle — Books — Italian guides — Passes — Modes of approaching Monte Rosa — The contrast exhibited in the scenery of the Northern and Southern sides — Mr. Ruskin's "Bird's-eye view" .. .. Page 1

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST VISIT TO ZERMATT.

Kandersteg — The Pass of the Gemmi — Can Monte Rosa be seen from this Pass? — A stumble on a precipice — Leukerbad — The Valley of the Rhone — Visp — Bad weather and Job's comforters — Start for Zermatt — The Valley of St. Nicholas — Another stumble — A damp journey — Lauber's Inn at Zermatt — Mont Cervin, or the Matterhorn — The Riffelberg — Monte Rosa — The Görner Glacier — Mont Cervin under an evening effect — The Schwartz See — Difficulty of estimating real size of mountains — Bridge over Zmutt torrent — Return to Zermatt 20

CHAPTER III.

THE PASS OF THE GREAT ST. BERNARD AND THE VAL D'AOSTA.

Return to Visp — The Valley of the Rhone — The poet, Robert Montgomery, as travelling companion — Martigny — Ill-treatment of travellers there — A bad muleteer — Ascent of the Great St. Bernard — Anecdotes of Mont-

gomery — Trick played by the muleteer — Arrival at the Hospice — Supper — The poet ejects the muleteer — Descent into the Val d'Aosta — Courmayeur and Mont Blanc — The Brenva Glacier — The Col du Géant and De Saussure — Glacier theories .. .. Page 41

CHAPTER IV.

THE VAL FORMAZZA, THE GRIES PASS, AND THE ÆGGISCH-HORN (FIRST VISIT).

Weather-bound at Airolo — Thomas and his horse "Fritz" — The Val di Bedretto — The Chapel of St. Giacomo — The Falls of the Tosa — Ander-Matten in Val Formazza — The Gries Pass — A fall on the glacier — Eagles and Lämmer-geyer — The Eginenthal — Chamois visible — A woman killed — Münster — The Æggisch-horn — Hôtel de la Jungfrau — Early rising rewarded — View from the summit of the Æggisch-horn — Mists and echoes — Return to the Hotel — The travellers' fever — Sudden start for Brieg 56

CHAPTER V.

TO ZERMATT (SECOND VISIT), AND FROM ZERMATT TO MATTMARKSEE BY THE VALLEYS OF ST. NICHOLAS AND SAAS.

From Visp to Zermatt — Italian guides — Improved accommodation at Zermatt — A quiet day on the Riffelberg — The lost horseshoe replaced — The lost brooch found — Return to Zermatt — Inconveniently tame sheep — Second Visit to the Schwartz See — The Zmutt Glacier — Journey to St. Nicholas — Suggestions for the better exploration of the country round Zermatt — Return to Stalden — Ascent of the Valley of Saas — Herr Imseng, the Curé of Saas — The Allelein Glacier — Mattmarksee in the dusk of evening — The Inn there 74

CHAPTER VI.

THE PASS OF THE MONTE MORO.

An early start — A raw morning — The Rosswaug Glacier — The parting with "Fritz" — "Fritz" and the silver knife — A Chamois on the glacier — A staircase up the mountain — The little cow a good climber — The summit of the Pass — Snow, mist, and disappointment — A glissade — The unveiling of Monte Rosa — Glorious view — The descent to Macugnaga — Lochmatter's Inn — Change of weather, and a storm 100

CHAPTER VII.

A FIRST VISIT TO THE VAL ANZASCA, THE LAGO D'ORTA, AND VARALLO.

A rainy day at Macugnaga — Glorious sunrise on Monte Rosa — A walk down the Val Anzasca — A polite Italian — Ponte Grande — Vogogna — The Lago d'Orta — Moonlight on San Giulio — A trip over the Col de Colma to Varallo — An interesting valet-de-place — Description of the Sacro Monte — Return to Orta .. .. Page 114

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THIRD VISIT TO MONTE ROSA: THE GRIMSEL, AND ANOTHER ASCENT OF THE ÆGGISCH-HORN.

The Grimsel — Glacier marks — The Hospice — The Table-d'hôte — Storm on the Grimsel — A goat's eccentricities — Society at the Grimsel — The Rhone Glacier — Walk down the upper valley of the Rhone — Münster — Viesch — The distant Weisshorn 131

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER VISIT TO THE ÆGGISCH-HORN — THE MÄRJELEN SEE AND ALETSCH GLACIER.

Once more on the summit of the Æggisch-horn — Fleeting Mists — A Circular Rainbow — Visiting cards left — The Märjelen See — Icebergs and Icecliffs — The Aletsch Glacier — Fall of an ice-cliff — Return by the water-course — Descent to Viesch — Snow bridges and concealed crevasses on the Aletsch Glacier 153

CHAPTER X.

THE PASS OF THE SIMPLON, AND A SECOND VISIT TO THE VAL ANZASCA.

Brieg — Continental facilities for forwarding luggage — Conduct of the Hotel-keeper at Brieg — The Simplon Pass — A slow coach and bad whip — Village of Simplon — The Gorge of Gonda by a rush-light — Perils of journeying in the dark to Isella — Sardinian Officials — Domo d'Ossola — Ascent of the Val Anzasca — Hotel at Ponte Grande and the landlord — Our proposed guide, "Young Greasy" — The barrier of Morgen — View of Monte Rosa — Macugnaga 170

CHAPTER XI.

THE BELVEDERE OF MACUGNAGA; THE BARANCA PASS; AND VAL MASTALONE.

Excursion to the Belvedere — The "lost Valley" — Monte Rosa from the Belvedere — Solitude among the mountains — The Weiss Thor — The Glacier — Pedriolo — The Turlo Pass — The Val Quarazza — Photography in the Alps — Return to Ponte Grande — From Ponte Grande to Varallo — The nervous mule-driver — Banio — The Val Ollocia — The Baranca Pass — Sheep and shepherds of the Bergamesque — A thunder-shower — The Val Mastalone — The Inn at Fobello — Frèra — The drive to Varallo .. Page 196

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAKE OF ORTA; MONTE MAZZUCCONE; AND CAMASCO.

Varallo — The Monte dei Tre Croci — View from its summit — Another visit to the Lake of Orta — The Col de Colma — Orta — The Hôtel San Giulio — Evening on the Lake — The boatmen — The fair at Omegna — Our juvenile guide to Camasco — Quarna — A pic-nic at the foot of the Monte Mazzuccone — View from the summit of Monte Mazzuccone — The valley of Camasco — Charcoal-burners — Camasco — The return to Varallo — The Princess Mathilde 232

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PILE ALPE AND VALLE DI BORS.

Our farewell to Varallo — The Val Sesia — The drive to Piode — The inn at Mollia — A side-saddle improvised — The cavalcade of mules — Riva and its wretched inn — Arrive at Alagna — The Curé Gnifetti — Excursion to the Pile Alpe — A weasel-chase — Monte Rosa from the Pile Alpe — The Valle di Bors and its châlets — Another view of Monte Rosa — The lazy guide — More side-saddle difficulties — Visit from three Italian gentlemen .. 257

CHAPTER XIV.

FROM ALAGNA TO GRESSONAY BY THE COL D'OLLEN.

Departure from Alagna — A lady's sidesaddle — A pattern mule and mule-driver — Innkeepers and guides — The Val d'Ollen — Difficulties of ascent — Traces of ancient moraines — A day's exploit for a first-rate walker —

A misadventure — Ascent of the Col d'Ollen — Ptarmigan — View from Gemstein — Early explorers of Monte Rosa — The descent to Gressonay — Serpentine rocks — A rain-storm on the mountain — Baron Peccoz — Arrival at Gressonay St. Jean — The "Pension de la Pierre" — An obliging landlord — Herr Zumstein — Val de Lys — Expedition to Cogne — Choice of Routes from Gressonay .. .. Page 280

CHAPTER XV.

FROM GRESSONAY TO AOSTA BY THE COL DE RANZOLA AND THE COL DE JON.

Departure from Gressonay — The discontented mule — The Col de Ranzola — A steep mountain-climb — The Pointe de Combetta — View from the Col — A far-distant glacier — Descent to Brussone — The Val Challant — The path up the Col de Jon — An "al-fresco" lunch — The lost packet — A testimony to Italian honesty — Summit of the Col de Jon — Descent to St. Vincent — Road to Châtillon — The "Palais Royal" Hotel — The valley of Aosta — Great heat — The vintage — Aosta — Goitre and cretinism — The "Hôtel du Mont Blanc" — Roman antiquities — Preparations for the journey to Cogne — The Abbé Cavagnet — English friends 312

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM AOSTA TO COGNE.

Departure from Aosta — A dusty road — Remains of ancient glacial action — The Château of Aimaville — Iron-mines of Cogne — Almond-trees — The Valley of Cogne — Roman aqueduct — Scanty population of the valley — The Curé of Vielle — Improvident miners — An inscribed rock — Dr. Grappin — View of the Pic de Grivola — The Bouquetin — A royal hunting-ground — The village of Cogne and its dirty inn — De la Pierre's greatness under difficulties — Fumigation — Weather omens 333

CHAPTER XVII.

EXPEDITION TO THE GRIVOLA.

De la Pierre's arrangements for the occasion — The Royal Chasseurs — The order of ascent — A poacher on royal preserves — The bouquetin — Pedestrianism in full activity — An obstacle to further advance — An Alpine tonic — Story of a guide and the rum bottle — A royal huntsman — The

ascent to the Pic — A rain-storm and hospitable sheltering place — A parting civility to La Grivola — A scamper down the mountain — Dr. Argentier — The rustic population of Cogne — Our party divided — The return to Aosta — Return to Châtillon — Exploit of the Curé of Cogne — The Becca de Nona .. .. Page 350

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE VAL TOURNANCHE AND THE PASS OF ST. THÉODULE.

Adieu to De la Pierre — A stroll up the Val Tournanche — The Roman aqueduct — The two grissan-eaters — Mont Cervin viewed from the Italian side — Description of the Pass of St. Théodule — Departure from Châtillon — Fort Bard — Pont St. Martin and Roman antiquities — Farewell to the mountains 372

CHAPTER XIX.

MODES OF MAKING THE COMPLETE TOUR OF MONTE ROSA.

The tour of sixteen days — The tour of ten days — Words of encouragement — Conclusion 389

—o—

APPENDIX.

No. I.—Pass of the New Weiss Thor from the Riffel (Zermatt) to Macugnaga 393
No. II.—Première ascension au Pic la Grivola 399

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

CHROMOLITHOGRAPHS.

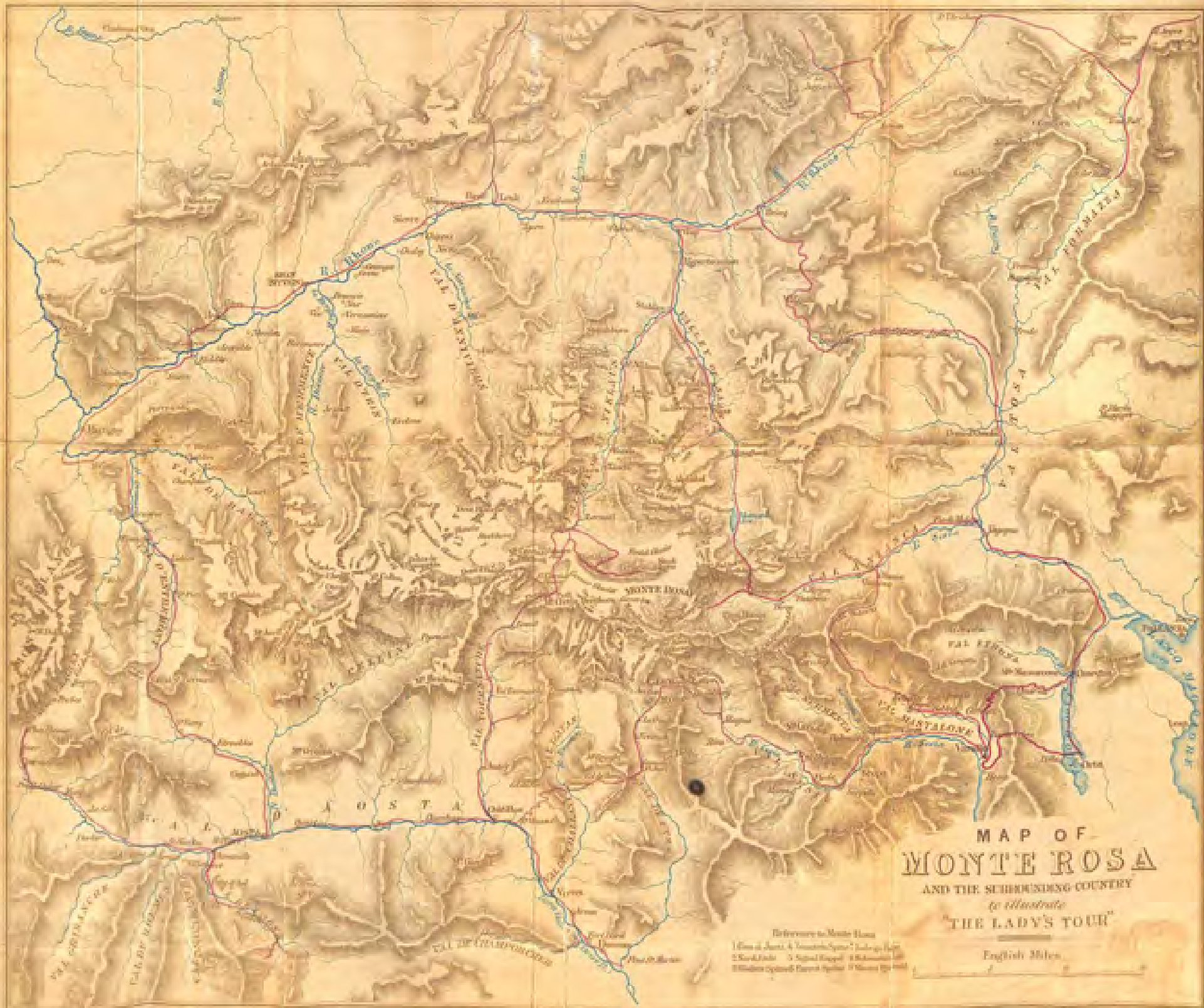
1. Monte Rosa, from the Belvedere .. .. *Frontispiece.*
2. Mont Cervin, from Zermatt .. .. *To face page* 36
3. Valley of Gressonay, looking towards the Lyskamm 309
4. Mont Cervin, from Breuil 378

—o—

WOODCUTS.

Page

1. Monte Rosa, from the Schwartz See 38
2. View of the Hospice of the Great St. Bernard 50
3. Mont Blanc, from the Mont Saxe 52
4. Mont Cervin, from the Schwartz See 89
5. Val Anzasca—the Morgen 188
6. View of Monte Rosa—Val Anzasca 193
7. Lake of Orta 238
8. Monte Emilius and Becca de Nona 323


MAP OF
MONTE ROSA
AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY
to illustrate
"THE LADY'S TOUR"
English Miles
MONTE ROSA
VAL D'AOSTA
VAL TOURNANCHE
VAL D'ANNIVIERS
VAL D'HERENS
VAL D'ARGENTINE
VAL GRESSONEY
VAL SESIA
VAL SERMENZA
VAL D'OSSOLA
VAL ANZASCA
VAL DE CHAMOUNY
VAL D'ENTREMONT
VAL DE BAGNES
VAL DE CONCHES
VAL DE BAGNES
VAL DE LOMBARDIE
VAL DE FERRET
VAL DE LA SALLE
VAL DE CHAMOUNY
VAL D'ORCHEX
VAL DE CHAMOUNY
VAL DE CHAMOUNY
VAL DE CHAMOUNY

A LADY'S TOUR ROUND MONTE ROSA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

The principal characteristics of Monte Rosa: 1. Its height; 2. The number of its peaks; 3. Its geological formation; 4. Its inhabitants of German and Italian origin; 5. The difference of vegetation on the Swiss and Italian sides — Advice on a Lady's dress and equipments for the Alps — Side saddle — Books — Italian guides — Passes — Modes of approaching Monte Rosa — The contrast exhibited in the scenery of the Northern and Southern sides — Mr. Ruskin's "Bird's-eye view."

HAVING successfully accomplished and thoroughly enjoyed the tour of MONTE ROSA, I desire to give, in the following pages, the benefits of my experience to others, in the hope of inducing them, and especially members of my own sex, to follow my example, and visit the valleys which surround this magnificent mountain, some of which have been hitherto but little frequented. For that purpose I shall endeavour to narrate the occurrences and adventures of three visits paid to Monte Rosa, in which the complete circuit of the mountain was made. When the variety and beauty of this district, and particularly of the Italian valleys, are more fully known, the tide of visitors will no doubt set in strongly there, and fill the

little inns to overflowing. New hostelries with better accommodation will then spring up in spots to which none but the most adventurous penetrate at present, merely because there is often no clean and comfortable resting-place to be found when the day's journey is finished.

Before giving an account of my adventures in accomplishing the tour of Monte Rosa, it will be well to call attention to some of those remarkable characteristics which distinguish this Queen of the Southern Alps from other mountains, and bestow on it charms peculiarly its own. They are described with great minuteness by De Saussure,* and the principal of them may be summed up as follows:—

1st. Monte Rosa is the highest mountain in Europe, with the exception of Mont Blanc, the latter being, according to the latest surveys, 15,744 feet, and Monte Rosa 15,284 feet, above the level of the sea.

2ndly. It is remarkable for the number of its lofty peaks, which are clustered together in a nucleus, which forms the summit, where huge chains of mountains meet and cross each other, and thence, as from a common centre, numerous valleys of exquisite beauty diverge on every side.

3rdly. There are several peculiarities in the geological formation of Monte Rosa. It contains numerous veins of gold; but the feature most important to tra-

* 'Voyages dans les Alpes,' Partie Pittoresque des ouvrages de H. B. de Saussure, p. 320.

vellers is the position or inclination of the strata, which, according to De Saussure, is nearly always horizontal, and from which, he says, results the gentleness of the outward slope of the mountain-chain, and the great height to which one can therefore attain on horseback. I may here add that, according to Von Tschudi, the mass of Monte Rosa consists of gneiss and fibrous granite; but it seems from Studer and Escher's Geological Map, that granite, which is very rare throughout the Alps, does not appear at all in the immediate neighbourhood of Monte Rosa. Mr. King* says that the geological structure of Monte Rosa is almost entirely of mica schist with abundance of quartz, and also beds of gneiss of different varieties; and that the specimens of the summit which Herr Zumstein showed him were of a reddish mica schist and solid white quartz. It must, however, be remembered that these were taken from the Zumstein Spitze. The actual summit, according to Von Tschudi, consists of quartzose mica slate; but a later and more authentic account states that the stones piled on this summit are partly mountain limestone and partly micaceous and quartzose schist, interspersed with a large quantity of talc and slate.†

4thly. The inhabitants living on the Italian side are also singularly interesting from the circumstance that in the upper parts of some of the principal valleys they

* 'The Italian Valleys of the Pennine Alps,' p. 268.

† Hudson and Kennedy, 'Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa,' p. 127.

are of German origin, and still speak the German language, whilst the lower parts of the same valleys are peopled by a different race, who speak French or Italian. This interesting circumstance did not escape the attention of De Saussure, and has drawn forth remarks from every traveller who has succeeded him. As history is silent on the subject, several theories have been suggested to account for it; but it is not really astonishing that the Germans, who were living on the more inclement and barren side of the Alps, should have crossed the easier passes and settled themselves in the upper parts of the valleys on the southern side, which were at least as fertile and fit for habitation as the places they came from. It is also easy to understand that the Italians, who were settled in the luxuriant plains below, or in the rich and productive lower valleys of the Alps, would be very slow in pressing upwards to more sterile regions, to encounter the dangers of precipices and avalanches, and endure the extreme cold which prevails there in the winter. Besides which, to judge from our present experience, there cannot be a more unenterprising race than the Italians in exploring mountainous regions; for nothing, even now, is more surprising than to find how little the inhabitants of the Italian valleys know about the country in which they live. My belief is that, except for smuggling purposes, very few of them ever explore the upper regions at all.

5thly. The striking difference which prevails in the vegetation on the Swiss and Italian sides of the Alps. This occasions as much variety as is possible in strictly Alpine scenery. Many will, for this reason, prefer the scenery of the Italian side. I have known some persons, especially ladies, who have been so much overpowered and even terror-stricken by the stern and severe character of Swiss scenery, that they could not fully appreciate its sublimity; but who would nevertheless thoroughly enjoy the softer beauties of the south, where the same majestic, snow-capped mountains are indeed met with, but set in a frame of the richest vegetation, which softens their ruggedness, and at the same time forms a lovely combination and contrast. The noble chestnut and walnut trees grow to a greater height on the southern side of the Alps, where they spread themselves in the grandest masses of luxuriant foliage. The little Alpine plants and flowers also abound on the Italian side more profusely than in Switzerland, and adorn the mountain sides up to the very edge of the snow, frequently making a garden in places where nothing could be seen from a distance but stony desolation. These charming flowers, which are often met with quite unexpectedly, always fill one with inexpressible delight, and cannot fail to call forth wonder and admiration at the lavish bounty of the Creator in placing such lovely and minute specimens of colour and form, even in spots where it would seem scarcely likely that human eye

should ever see them, or bee or insect extract the honey which they contain.* The number, and perhaps the variety, of butterflies and moths, is also greater on the sunnier side of the Alps; and even as late as August and September I have seen many beautiful specimens.

A few words about dress may not be out of place in the account of a Lady's Tour, which may perhaps induce others to make the same journey. Ladies who visit the Alpine passes should take nothing with them which can possibly be dispensed with; for it will be found, when making a long day's excursion over the mountains, that the porters, if heavily loaded, always lag behind, much to the disgust of the other pedestrians. This is especially the case on the Italian side, where two men will grumble at the weight which one sturdy Swiss porter would carry willingly. Besides, it is very disappointing to have to give up a projected excursion on account of the difficulty of transporting the baggage. The heavier luggage should always be sent on by the diligence from place to place, and only those things which are absolutely necessary should be taken in mountain expeditions.

Of course every lady engaged on an Alpine journey will wear a broad-brimmed hat, which will relieve her from the incumbrance of a parasol. She should also have a dress of some light woollen material, such

* According to Von Tschudi there are in Switzerland little short of 1000 different species, many of which exhibit from 60 to 100 varieties. —*Sketches of Nature in the Alps*, p. 29.

as carmelite or alpaca, which, in case of bad weather, does not look utterly forlorn when it has once been wetted and dried. Small rings should be sewn inside the seams of the dress, and a cord passed through them, the ends of which should be knotted together in such a way that the whole dress may be drawn up at a moment's notice to the requisite height. If the dress is too long, it catches the stones, especially when coming down hill, and sends them rolling on those below. I have heard more than one gentleman complain of painful blows suffered from such accidents. A lady's dress is inconvenient for mountain-travelling, even under the most careful management, and therefore every device which may render it less so should be adopted. A riding-skirt, without a body, which can be slipped on and off in a moment, is also invaluable: it should be made of light waterproof cloth, only just long enough to cover the feet when riding. This prevents the dress from being soiled, and in case of bad weather also serves to keep one dry. A Scotch plaid or two, which may serve as shawls, blankets, or even sheets, according to the exigency of circumstances, and a macintosh cape with hood, will be found most useful. But one of the most important things of all is to have a pair of easily-fitting, strong, treble-soled, broad-footed boots, in which some hob-nails should be put — smaller, but of the same kind as those used for gentlemen's shooting-boots; and

although, before leaving home, one looks with perfect horror at such heavy boots, I have found from experience that they save the feet from bruises in coming down stony paths, and that in a few days, after having felt the protection they afford, one learns to regard them with great complacency and gratitude. What are called "military heels" would be dangerous, and must be avoided; but the heel should be just sufficiently raised to prevent the sole being too smooth and level. If the soles are thick enough to admit of having Lund's glacier nails * screwed into them, when necessary, great additional security will be felt in walking over a glacier. The mere feeling of surefootedness gives confidence, and actually saves one from slipping.

The traveller should also have a small waterproof bag, large enough to contain Murray's indispensable 'Handbook,' some good maps, a small opera-glass, a few spare straps, and veils for crossing the snow. It is always prudent to keep in this bag a flask, with a roll, biscuit, or some trifling thing to eat, and to which one can get access at the moment it is required, without the trouble of unpacking the provisions carried for lunch. This bag should have a strap round it, by which it may be fastened to the saddle or carried in the hand, and should be provided with a lock.

One great difficulty in travelling on the Italian side is to find sidesaddles for ladies; indeed, as a general

* These are to be had at Lund's cutlery shop in Fleet Street.

rule, no horse can be obtained, usually only a mule, and sometimes nothing but a donkey, and no sidesaddle for either. One of the most recent travellers in the Italian valleys is the Rev. S. W. King, who was accompanied by his wife. Mrs. King took with her one of Whippy's portable sidesaddles, which folded into a compact waterproof case, and could be adapted with equal facility to horse, mule, or donkey. This was of the greatest use, and inspired the proudest feeling of independence. The necessity of providing sidesaddles is becoming, however, more generally understood by innkeepers in Piedmont, and I trust that this difficulty will speedily disappear.

It is necessary to restrict the travelling library within reasonable limits, and it requires considerable courage and firmness to do this effectually, for one's inclination is to take every book that gives information about the country. A few choice favourites may, however, be selected. I would particularly recommend a very charming little book, one of the volumes of the 'Traveller's Library,' called 'Sketches of Nature in the Alps.' It is an abridged translation by an accomplished lady of Von Tschudi's large work, 'Das Thierleben der Alpenwelt,' and is small enough to be carried about without inconvenience. No one who truly loves what is beautiful in Alpine nature and scenery, and wishes to understand them thoroughly, can fail to be pleased with this book, especially when it is read in

Alpine regions. Those who delight in flowers will, I am sure, be glad to possess, and ought to carry with them, a little work in two volumes, called 'Die Alpen-Pflanzen Deutschlands und der Schweiz,' by J. C. Weber.* This contains coloured pictures, the size of nature, of most of the Alpine flowers, with the German and Latin names; there is also a list of the plants and the times when they are in flower.† Travellers who wish for assistance in geology will find the reduced copy of 'Studer and Escher's Geological Chart of Switzerland' of great assistance in understanding the structure of the rocks over which they are to pass, and the study of this chart will be found to give great additional interest to the country, even though the traveller may have but little knowledge of geology.

Some of the principal writers whose descriptions will be found useful to those who wish to make the tour round Monte Rosa are De Saussure,‡ Colonel Von Welden,§ Professor James Forbes,‖ the brothers Her-

* München, Christian Kaiser, 1847.

† An English edition of this work, a little more complete and explanatory than the original, would be most valuable. Few persons could confer this boon on the public better than the President of the Alpine Club, who is said to know every flower, fern, and grass in the Alps.

‡ 'Voyages dans les Alpes.' Partie Pittoresque des ouvrages de H. B. de Saussure. Paris, 1855.

§ 'Der Monte Rosa. Eine Topographische und Naturhistorische Skizze.' Von Ludwig Freiherrn von Welden. Vien, 1824.

‖ 'The Tour of Mont Blanc and of Monte Rosa,' by James B. Forbes, D.C.L., F.R.S., &c.

mann and Adolph Schlagintweit,* M. Giovanni Gnifetti, the curé of Alagna,† Mr. Hinchliff,‡ and the Rev. Mr. King; § Mr. Wills has also given some interesting descriptions of the Swiss side of Monte Rosa.‖ Unfortunately for lady travellers, Murray's 'Handbook' is, with respect to the Italian side of Monte Rosa, less explicit and satisfactory than usual, and most of the scanty descriptions contained in it are written by pedestrians for the use of pedestrians. This last observation also applies to the accounts given by Professor James Forbes and Mr. Hinchliff of the Italian valleys. They moreover laboured under the disadvantage of having had bad weather in some of the most important localities there, which prevented their viewing the scenery to advantage, and interfered to some extent with their making those explorations which are necessary to a thorough appreciation of the beauties of this little frequented country.

De Saussure travelled with a train of six mules, and therefore his account is useful for that reason to those who are not pedestrians, besides being most interesting from the clearness and charm of his narrative; but

* 'Neue Untersuchungen über die Physicalische Geographie und die Geologie der Alpen.' Von Hermann Schlagintweit und Adolph Schlagintweit. Leipzig, Weigel, 1854.

† 'Nozioni Topografiche del Monte Rosa,' di Giovanni Gnifetti, Paroco d'Alagna.

‡ 'Summer Months among the Alps.' By Thomas W. Hinchliff.

§ 'The Italian Valleys of the Pennine Alps.' By the Rev. S. W. King, M.A.

‖ 'Wanderings among the High Alps.' By Alfred Wills.

the accommodations the district now affords to travellers are of course much better than was the case in his time, when, at some places, even the innkeepers objected to receive him and his companions at all, and in none could he obtain the excellent food and shelter which are now to be found at the principal resting-places.

As Mr. King was accompanied by his wife throughout his journey, his book will be found peculiarly valuable to ladies; but judging from my own experience, the difficulties to be encountered in passing from one valley to another sometimes appear involuntarily exaggerated in his descriptions, and will not, I think, always be found so formidable as he represents them. At the same time I must acknowledge that I have not visited every valley and mountain which he did, nor ever had such rough accommodation as he and Mrs. King were sometimes obliged to submit to.

Whatever slight overcolouring there may in this respect be in Mr. King's book, I attribute to the impression which was no doubt made on his mind at the time by the Italian guides who were with him. These men, unlike the experienced and courageous guides of the Oberland or Chamounix, are, with few exceptions, very indifferently acquainted with their own country, and much disposed to magnify all its dangers, especially when they have to conduct a lady. It is often annoying to find how little they know about the passes and points

of view most interesting to travellers which lie in their own immediate neighbourhood. Being in a state of nervous apprehension at finding themselves engaged in an occupation to which they are unaccustomed, and feeling perhaps desirous of getting through their day's work with as little personal exertion as possible, they often manage to create a good deal of excitement in the minds of travellers when there is no real occasion for any, and when the difficulties are not greater than those which ladies are accustomed to overcome every day in Switzerland without thinking much about them.

In order to accomplish the tour of Monte Rosa, the traveller who is on the northern side should, if the weather will permit, cross into Italy by the Monte Moro Pass and return by the St. Théodule; or the route may be reversed, and the St. Théodule be first crossed. But in that case only gentlemen can be recommended to return by the Moro, which is, on the Italian side, so steep and fatiguing, that it would be a most arduous undertaking for a lady.

It sometimes happens, however, that from the state of the snow or the badness of the weather, ladies cannot safely venture to cross the passes of Monte Moro or St. Théodule, which constitute what I will call the two Inner Passes of the Monte Rosa tour. In that case there are two others which may be called the Outer Passes, namely, the Simplon and Great St. Bernard, and

by means of these the tour may always be certainly and safely accomplished. But although these outer passes are, in themselves, most interesting, it must be remembered that Monte Rosa cannot be seen from either of them, and therefore the passes of the Moro and St. Théodule are clearly preferable. One reason why I mention the passes of the Simplon and Great St. Bernard is, because carriages can be taken over the first, and horses and mules over the latter, which is not the case with either the Moro or St. Théodule. The Moro is quite impassable for equestrians, and the St. Théodule generally so, although De Saussure managed to cross it with his cavalcade, and occasionally the snow is in such a favourable state that it is still at certain periods of the year practicable for cattle and horses. Ladies who are good mountaineers can, however, cross the Moro Pass from the Swiss side by riding to a point within about an hour from its summit; they must then cross the summit on foot, and descend, in the same way, the steep path which leads to Macugnaga. They can also cross the St. Théodule from Zermatt by riding to the snow and walking the rest of the way to Breuil. In the district which on the Italian side lies between the passes of St. Théodule and the Moro several mountain-chains have to be crossed, in order to get from one valley to another; but there is always this advantage, that, in case of bad weather, you can descend to the lower part of any valley, and easily reach some com-

fortable quarters there, like those afforded by Varallo, Gressonay St. Jean, or Châtillon.

In order to understand the range of country comprised in the following descriptions, the reader must remember that it is a very extensive and irregularly-formed district.* The valley of the Rhone forms its northern boundary, and it is from different points of this prolonged valley, which extends nearly in a straight line for about 60 miles east and west from the Glacier of the Rhone to Martigny, that the various routes which lead from the north across the mighty chain of the Alps which separate Switzerland from Italy have their commencement. On the southern side of this chain there is no valley parallel to that of the Rhone until you reach St. Vincent, from which place the valley of Aosta runs in a tolerably straight line towards the west as far as Courmayeur, where it meets the immense barrier formed by the southern side of Mont Blanc. But towards the east, between St. Vincent and the Simplon road, there is nowhere any valley parallel to that of the Rhone; on the contrary, there is a series of spurs springing from Monte Rosa like fingers from an outspread hand, and every one of these spurs, which itself forms a smaller chain of important mountains, has to be crossed in succession by the traveller. None, however, is of a very formidable character, though most of them are difficult. Owing to this geographical arrangement, the English

* See the Map.

tourist, in approaching Monte Rosa, will generally find it most convenient to do so by entering, in the first place, the valley of the Rhone, and subsequently crossing to the Italian side of the mountains. The valley of the Rhone may be entered either from the Lake of Geneva at the western end, or by the passes which lead from the Grimsel or the Furka to the Glacier of the Rhone at the eastern end. It may also be entered by the Gries Pass, which leads from the foot of the St. Gothard to Ulrichen. Another interesting mode of entering the valley of the Rhone is to go from Thun to Leuk across the celebrated Gemmi Pass. There is likewise a little frequented route, which proceeds from Thun along the Simmenthal, and leads across the Rawyl Pass to Sion, but I believe that a long and difficult day's journey of about 12 hours is required to cross that pass.

Another mode of making the tour of Monte Rosa would be to begin on the Italian side, in which case it would be a convenient plan to cross the Mont Cenis to Turin, from which the traveller can speedily reach either Châtillon or Gressonay. A further alternative would be to cross the passes of the Simplon or St. Gothard, and thus approach Monte Rosa by the valleys which are on the south-eastern side of it.

Another and quick route to the Italian valleys of Monte Rosa would be to go by railway from Paris to Chambéry, and then to cross the Little St. Bernard to

St. Didier in the Val d'Aosta. This is said to be the pass over which Hannibal led his army into Italy, and it is therefore as interesting in an historical point of view as from its beautiful scenery.

Nothing can be more striking than the contrast afforded by the varied aspects of the different districts included within the tract of country I have described. In fact, every kind of scenery may be found there, from the grandest and sternest mountains to the sweetest and most cultivated valleys. What, for instance, can differ more widely from the utter desolation which reigns at Mattmarksee, than the exquisite loveliness of the charming Lake of Orta!—or, to take another example, what contrast can be greater than that between the cold, severe character of the valley of St. Nicholas, near Zermatt, and the rich and luxuriant Val Anzasca! There is no monotony in the tour round Monte Rosa, no mere repetition of the same scenes, but the whole abounds with endless variety; and in order properly to describe it, one ought to be endowed with the marvellous powers which are displayed by Mr. Ruskin in treating of natural scenery. In one of his works he has portrayed, with the utmost felicity, the striking difference which exists between the vegetation of Northern and Southern climes; and though his "bird's-eye view" takes in a wider extent of country than the district of Monte Rosa, it will be found to bring vividly to the reader's mind a better idea than I can attempt

to give of the diversity of character and climate which prevails there. He says*—

"I have never yet seen any description pictorial enough to enable the spectator to imagine the kind of contrast in physical character which exists between Northern and Southern countries. We know the differences in detail, but we have not that broad glance and grasp which would enable us to feel them in their fulness. We know that gentians grow on the Alps, and olives on the Apennines; but we do not enough conceive for ourselves that variegated mosaic of the world's surface which a BIRD sees in its migration, that difference between the district of the gentian and of the olive which the stork and the swallow see far off, as they lean upon the sirocco wind. Let us, for a moment, try to raise ourselves even above the level of their flight, and imagine the Mediterranean lying beneath us like an irregular lake, and all its ancient promontories sleeping in the sun: here and there an angry spot of thunder, a grey stain of storm moving upon the burning field; and here and there a fixed wreath of white volcano smoke, surrounded by its circle of ashes: but for the most part a great peacefulness of light, Syria and Greece, Italy and Spain, laid like pieces of a golden pavement into the sea-blue, chased, as we stoop nearer to them, with bossy beaten work of mountain chains, and glowing softly with terraced gardens, and flowers heavy with frankincense, mixed among masses of laurel, and orange, and plumy palm, that abate with their grey-green shadows the burning of the marble rocks, and of the ledges of porphyry sloping under lucent sand. Then let us pass farther towards the north, until we see the orient colours change gradually into a vast belt of rainy green, where the pastures of Switzerland, and poplar valleys of France, and dark forests of the Danube and Carpathians stretch from the mouths of the Loire to those of the Volga, seen through clefts in grey swirls of rain-cloud and flaky veils of the mist of the brooks, spreading low along the pasture lands; and then, farther north still, to see the earth heave into mighty masses of leaden rock and heathy moor, bordering with a broad waste of gloomy

* 'The Stones of Venice,' vol. ii. chap. 6, p. 155, by John Ruskin.

purple that belt of field and wood, and splintering into irregular and grisly islands amidst the northern seas, beaten by storm, and chilled by ice-drifts, and tormented by furious pulses of contending tide, until the roots of the last forests fail from among the hill ravines, and the hunger of the north-wind bites their peaks into barrenness; and at last, the wall of ice, durable like iron, sets, deathlike, its white teeth against us out of the polar twilight."

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST VISIT TO ZERMATT.

Kandersteg — The Pass of the Gemmi — Can Monte Rosa be seen from this Pass? — A stumble on a precipice — Leukerbad — The Valley of the Rhone — Visp — Bad weather and Job's comforters — Start for Zermatt — The Valley of St. Nicholas — Another stumble — A damp journey — Lauber's Inn at Zermatt — Mont Cervin, or the Matterhorn — The Riffelberg — Monte Rosa — The Görner Glacier — Mont Cervin under an evening effect — The Schwartzsee — Difficulty of estimating real size of mountains — Bridge over Zmutt torrent — Return to Zermatt.

My first visit to Monte Rosa was in the year 1850, when having heard much of the magnificence of the view from the Riffelberg, and feeling a great desire to go there, my husband took me with him to Zermatt. Accordingly on the 21st August, H— and I left Thun in a little carriage for Frutigen, where we remained until the following morning, and then drove to Kandersteg, at the foot of the Gemmi Pass. The inn at Kandersteg had at that time a bad reputation, and every one endeavoured to avoid it; but I hear that it is now kept by a very civil landlord, who has greatly improved it, and changed its name to Hôtel Victoria. The landlady who kept the inn in 1850 has been dispossessed, and has established herself in a new house, nearer to Frutigen, called by the

appropriate name of Hôtel de l'Ours. At Kandersteg we engaged saddle-horses to take us to the Dauben See at the summit of the pass, where their further services were to be dispensed with. We also hired a baggage-horse to go the whole distance to Leukerbad. This was a large, powerful animal, named "Fuchs;" and he carried our portmanteau, carpet bags, and cloaks, with very little difficulty, except during the descent. It is useless to hire saddle-horses beyond the Dauben See, as it is impossible to ride down the steep path to Leukerbad with any safety; and if the horses are taken on, the charge for them is nearly double. We heard, however, that some English ladies had recently ventured to ride down the whole way to Leukerbad, notwithstanding the terrible danger of the exploit.

We stopped for luncheon at Schwarenbach, which is about half-way to Leukerbad. Directly we arrived in sight of the summits of the snowy mountains on the opposite side of the valley of the Rhone, in the direction of Monte Rosa, the guide stopped our horses, and we alighted and sent them back. The day was bright and sunny, and we enjoyed from the top of the pass a fine view of what I am now told was the Weisshorn, but which the man who had charge of the baggage-horse told us was undoubtedly Monte Rosa. Indeed the prevailing opinion seems at present to be, that Monte Rosa is not visible from the Gemmi at all; and if so, the guide's representation was of course incorrect. It will, however,

be difficult to persuade the people of the district that the snow-capped peaks seen in the distance, towards the south, do not form part of the true Monte Rosa chain, there being an ancient tradition to the contrary. Nor does this tradition rest on the inaccurate conception of ignorant minds; for Colonel Von Welden himself, one of the greatest authorities on the subject of Monte Rosa, has in his highly valuable work given, as one of his pictorial illustrations (see Tab. No. 4), a view of Monte Rosa from the Gemmi; and in this view the Monte Moro, the Cima di Jazzi, and the Monte Rosa proper, with the Nord End, the Höchste Spitze, the Parrot Spitze, and the Lyskamm, are all depicted, with their well-known forms clearly defined and their names appended. This view was not, like most of the others given in Von Welden's work, taken with the camera lucida, but is described as being "aus freier hand gezeichnet." But we are now told, in Murray's 'Handbook,' "Monte Rosa cannot be seen from the Gemmi, being completely hidden by the Weisshorn" (p. 118, 7th edition). The authority for this statement in Murray is most probably Englehardt,* who states that the Weisshorn is in the same line of direction as Monte Rosa, and entirely blocks out the view of that mountain. He says that the group seen to the east of the Weisshorn, where the mountains rise up into a series of pyramidal peaks, one above another, belong to the Saasgrat chain, and that

* Naturschilderungen, p. 73.

this group is the one usually but erroneously taken for that of Monte Rosa. He seems, however, to admit that Mont Cervin may be seen from the Gemmi. As he has crossed this pass no less than seven times, his testimony is most important, and it has no doubt been implicitly received by subsequent writers, who have repeated the same statement. Mr. Wills, in the text of his book, mentions having had a view of Monte Rosa from the Gemmi, but in the "Errata" he corrects this statement, and repeats what is written in Murray about the Weisshorn hiding all view of it. I can only say that a mountain called Monte Rosa was pointed out to us by a local guide who ought to know something about the matter: and I cannot suppose that Von Welden would invent his picture. I must therefore be permitted to suggest that there may still be some doubt as to whether Von Welden was so egregiously wrong as is now represented.

The scenery of the Gemmi was not particularly interesting or remarkable until we reached the top of the pass. Nothing indeed could be much drearier or more desolate than the Dauben See, and the general character of the road to it from Kandersteg; and those who traverse the Gemmi without seeing the distant view must be greatly disappointed. The descent to Leukerbad is, however, so wonderful, from its excessive steepness, that it is difficult to conceive how the project of forming a mule-path there could ever have been seriously entertained. At several places the guide stopped to tell us

of some fearful accidents which had happened there; and we nearly had the opportunity of witnessing something of the kind, for "Fuchs," though very strong and careful, and evidently accustomed to and understanding his work, fell once on his knees at the very brink of a precipice, and we trembled for him and our portmanteau on his back. Fortunately, however, he was up again in a minute. The guide held in his hand a cord with a piece of wood at the end, like that used in flying a kite, and this was fastened to the baggage on the pack-saddle. He walked behind the horse, holding him up with this as we went down the steep declivity, instead of merely taking hold by the tail, after the usual Swiss fashion. It was at a moment when he had slackened the cord that the horse fell. It took us nearly four hours to ride to the top of the Gemmi, and about two hours and a half to descend on foot to the Hôtel des Alpes at Leukerbad. We found this inn tolerably comfortable, considering that it is only inhabited during the summer months. The village itself is a very poor place. Its celebrity is derived from the well-known medicinal baths. The water of these is hot; and the patients, dressed in long woollen gowns, are soaked in them for several hours, sometimes as many as eight in a day. To while away the time, the patients read, eat, drink, and play at cards and dominoes in the hot water, having little tables which float about on the surface. We thought it very droll, but not very inviting, to see half-

a-dozen or more of them huddled together in one bath. The hot water constantly flows in at one end and out at the other, but still the water in the bath must always be a kind of undesirable infusion. At the table-d'hôte we saw, for the first time, some of the ladies of the Valais, within which district Leukerbad is situated, wearing their peculiar head-dress. This is made of a broad gold-edged ribbon, and sometimes of gold tissue; and its shape reminds one of the mural crown usually placed on the head of female statues which represent cities. It is by no means unbecoming.

The situation of Leukerbad is very beautiful, and there are many interesting excursions to be made from it. One of the most remarkable is the ascent of the Torrenthorn. On the morning after our arrival, we contented ourselves with a walk to the celebrated "Ladders," by which the peasants ascend from the valley to the village on the heights above it. These ladders were in a most rickety state, placed on ledges of rock one above the other, almost perpendicularly, and exhibiting every appearance of insecurity. We were quite satisfied to view them from below. As we returned to Leukerbad we looked up towards the Gemmi, and wondered how it was possible for a horse to have come down. The face of the rock looked like a sheer precipice, and it was only here and there that we could distinguish the slightest trace of the zigzag road, which is not always protected by a parapet.

In the afternoon we left Leukerbad in a *char-à-banc*, and after descending the then scarcely-finished road to the dirty old town of Leuk, we drove along the flat, unwholesome valley of the Rhone to Visp. The weather was warm and cloudy, and did not seem propitious for a mountain excursion. We had not been at Visp more than a few minutes when we saw an English lady and gentleman arrive on horseback from Zermatt. They were drenched with rain, tired and dispirited; and on our inquiring how they had fared at Zermatt, they informed us that they had found the weather so bad that they had seen absolutely nothing. The mountains, they said, were enveloped in mist; the accommodation at the little inn was of the humblest character, and they had waited there for the rain to cease until they were quite tired, and had then left in despair. They said they had been twelve hours in returning from Zermatt, and complained of the badness of the horses hired at Visp. They strongly dissuaded us from proceeding to Zermatt, and half induced us to abandon our journey. After much deliberation, however, we resolved to be guided in our determination by the state of the weather on the following morning, and gave orders to be called early.

As we intended to proceed to the Val d'Aosta, we inquired at Visp whether it would be practicable for a lady to cross the Pass of St. Théodule, and whether we could take our portmanteau and carpet bags with us; but we obtained very little satisfactory information on

that subject. There were comparatively but few travellers who at that period visited Zermatt, and Visp was then very ill supplied with guides or horses for such an excursion. It is different now; for excellent guides and good horses may always be obtained there. The people at the inn told us that that season was a bad one for the St. Théodule, and that there was so much new-fallen snow on the pass that it would be impracticable for a lady to cross it, and they advised us by all means to leave our heavy luggage at the hotel, and return to Visp; we could then proceed by the diligence to Martigny, and cross the Great St. Bernard to Aosta. As everybody held out to us discouraging prospects, we thought it would be only prudent to follow this advice; but I fear that there is always a desire on the part of the people at Visp to induce travellers to leave some of their effects there, as a means of insuring their return, and all representations which lead to that result should therefore be carefully scrutinised.

Aug. 24.—Leaving our heavy luggage at Visp, we started at 7 A.M., with two horses and two men. The horses were heavy, clumsy creatures, more adapted to the road than mountain travelling, and the men were perfectly inefficient. The steep road from Visp to Stalden soon took us out of the heavy atmosphere which is always so disagreeable in the Valley of the Rhone; and it was quite refreshing to climb upwards into lighter and purer air. On leaving Visp we found

the first part of the Valley of St. Nicholas adorned with vines and fine forest-trees of great variety; but above Stalden few trees are met with, except the larch and fir. Throughout the valley there is an abundance of barberry bushes, whose bright scarlet fruit is very pretty. We found also a good many wild raspberries. Some parts of the road were in the year 1850 very formidable to those travelling on horseback, for it frequently wound just above the brink of precipices which sloped down to the noisy, foaming torrent below, and afforded very insecure footing. Since the earthquake of 1855 the road has been greatly improved, and some portion is newly made every year. In one place we had to cross a very slightly-constructed wooden bridge, in order to reach which it was necessary to ride up some large, smooth slabs of stone, placed one above the other; then crossing the fragile structure, which shook beneath us, we finally gained the path on the other side by descending some more loose stones. One of these stones gave way as H— rode down, and his horse fell. He managed, however, to pull him up, with nothing worse happening than a little fright to myself. My horse always went first, and the other insisted pertinaciously on his doing so. On one occasion, when the road was very bad, and it was necessary to get on as fast as we could, in order to escape being benighted, H—, at my request, endeavoured to urge his horse past mine, but in vain. The horse positively refused to move one step in

advance, and backed and reared on the very edge of the precipice until prudence compelled his rider to give up the struggle, and allow mine to continue to take the lead as before.

As we ascended towards St. Nicholas, we entered into a region of clouds in which everything was hidden from our view, except the bottom of the valley and the roaring torrent there. The mists obstinately curled up the valley, and clung to the flanks and summits of the mountains. The day was close and moist, and not a single person of whom we made inquiries about the weather gave us an encouraging word. At St. Nicholas, which is about half-way to Zermatt, we met an English gentleman and two ladies returning in a state of deep depression. They had seen nothing there, and declared that there was no probability of the weather improving. Their words seemed true, for shortly afterwards the few light showers which had inconvenienced us before, turned into decidedly heavy rain.

It was 7 P.M. when we arrived at Zermatt, tired, damp, and dispirited. The men who accompanied us to take care of the horses were unaccustomed to the work, and were so completely knocked up by the walk that they could scarcely drag themselves on to Zermatt. After we had left St. Nicholas they made many entreaties that we would stop at some place on the road for the night; but there was no fit sleeping-place anywhere between St. Nicholas and Zermatt, and we therefore insisted on

proceeding. We arrived at our destination just as it became dark; nothing was visible except the village and the green valley in which it is placed. Above us hung thick, dark clouds. Occasionally, through the masses of vapour, we could observe in the sky that the higher clouds were drifting in an opposite direction to the mists which curled up the valley. We were fortunate enough to secure a bedroom in the little wooden inn belonging to the village doctor, Herr Lauber, which was then the only house for the reception of travellers in Zermatt. It was tolerably comfortable, but unfortunately the floors looked as if they had never been washed since the house was built. The *salle-à-manger* was poorly furnished with rough deal tables and benches. We were supplied, however, with a very fair supper of several dishes, but all of one material, obtained no doubt from the same poor sheep. We had soup made of mutton, and then mutton boiled, mutton roasted, and mutton broiled. We found, on our arrival, two Englishmen and a Frenchman sitting in a state of despondency in the *salle-à-manger*, which they had been unable to quit all day; and they looked most significantly at one another and smiled when they saw us arrive in such bad weather.

Aug. 25.—When daybreak came we looked out anxiously at the sky, but the weather seemed as unpromising as during the day before. The wind had, however, changed, and at 10 A.M. some favourable symptoms appeared. The clouds gradually dispersed, and at last

MONT CERVIN, or the Matterhorn,* began slowly to display its majestic form to our eager eyes. Shortly before 11 A.M. its summit was clearly visible from the window of the inn. H— at once began to sketch it, lest he should not have another opportunity. We felt ourselves in a few minutes already repaid for our dreary journey of the preceding day. We immediately ordered fresh horses and guides to take us to the Riffelberg; for those we had brought from Visp were not only tired, but in other respects quite unfitted to scramble along the rugged path up which we were going. This path has since been much improved, but the ascent was then most difficult in many places, and the route ill defined. However, our little mountain horses went up very cleverly. During our journey upwards Mont Cervin became gradually freer from clouds, and at last stood entirely unveiled before our delighted eyes.

The form of this celebrated mountain always excites the admiration of travellers, and no description can do it justice. One thing remarkable about it is that it appears to rise up bodily from a glacier and to stand by itself, unencumbered by the too close proximity of any ridge to dwarf its height or interfere with the view of

* This noble mountain is generally called the Matterhorn at Zermatt, but it is called Mont Cervin by De Saussure, Von Welden, Professor Forbes, the Schlagintweits, Mr. Ruskin, and other great authorities. Considering this to be its European name I have adopted it, though I much prefer the local one of the Matterhorn. On the Italian side it is sometimes called Monte Ciadello and Monte Sylvio.

its graceful and majestic proportions. It is only about 1000 feet lower than Mont Blanc, and up to the present time no mountaineer has succeeded in scaling its terrible precipices and planting foot on the unsullied snow of its summit.

Mr. RUSKIN* speaks of Mont Cervin as "a fragment of building among the Alps," and thus describes its appearance and structure:—

"It is a fragment of some size; a group of broken walls, one of them overhanging; crowned with a cornice, nodding some 150 feet over its massy flank, 3000 feet above its glacier base, and 14,000 above the sea,—a wall truly of some majesty, at once the most precipitous and the strongest mass in the whole chain of the Alps, the Mont Cervin.

"It has been falsely represented as a peak or tower. It is a vast ridged promontory, connected at its western root with the Dent d'Erin, and lifting itself, like a rearing horse, with its face to the east. All the way along the flank of it, for half a day's journey on the Zmutt Glacier, the grim black terraces of its foundations range almost without a break; and the clouds, when their day's work is done, and they are weary, lay themselves down on those foundation steps, and rest till dawn, each with his leagues of grey mantle stretched across the grisly ledge, and the cornice of the mighty wall gleaming in the moonlight, 3000 feet above.

"The eastern face of the promontory is hewn down, as if by the single sweep of a sword, from the crest of it to the base; hewn concave and smooth, like the hollow of a wave: on each flank of it there is set a buttress, both of about equal height, their heads sloped out from the main wall about 700 feet below its summit. That on the north is the most important; it is as sharp as the frontal angle of a bastion, and sloped sheer away to the north-east, throwing out spur beyond spur, until it terminates in a long low curve of russet

* 'The Stones of Venice,' vol. i. cap. 5, p. 57.

precipice, at whose foot a great bay of the glacier of the Col de Cervin lies as level as a lake. This spur is one of the few points from which the mass of the Mont Cervin is in anywise approachable. It is a continuation of the masonry of the mountain itself, and affords us the means of examining the character of the materials.

"Few architects would like to build with them. The slope of the rocks to the north-west is covered two feet deep with their ruins, a mass of loose and slaty shale, of a dull red-brick colour, which yields beneath the foot like ashes, so that, in running down, you step one yard and slide three. The rock is indeed hard beneath, but still disposed in thin courses of these cloven shales, so finely laid that they look in places more like a heap of crushed autumn-leaves than a rock; and the first sensation is one of unmitigated surprise, as if the mountain were upheld by miracle; but surprise becomes more intelligent reverence for the Great Builder, when we find, in the middle of the mass of these dead leaves, a course of living rock, of quartz as white as the snow that encircles it, and harder than a bed of steel.

"It is only one of a thousand iron bands that knit the strength of the mighty mountain. Through the buttress and the wall alike, the courses of its varied masonry are seen in their successive order, smooth and true as if laid by line and plummet;* but of thickness and strength continually varying, and with silver cornices glittering along the edge of each, laid by the snowy winds and carved by the sunshine,—stainless ornaments of the eternal temple, by which 'neither the hammer nor the axe, nor any tool, was heard while it was in building.'"

The afternoon was splendid, but the tops of some of the mountains were never, during the whole day, entirely disengaged from mist. At 3 P.M. we reached the top of the Riffelberg, where we dismissed our horses, and we were conducted to a sheltered spot just below the Riffelhorn. This was then considered

* "On the eastern side: violently contorted on the northern and western.—J. R."

the finest point of view for seeing the Monte Rosa chain, but it has since been superseded by the Görner Grat, which we found, on a subsequent visit, in 1856, to command a far superior prospect of the mountains, though not so good of the glaciers. As we looked towards Monte Rosa the enormous mass of the Görner Glacier, for nearly its whole length, was seen descending from it, spread out beneath our feet; and the lateral moraines which, sweeping in graceful curves, ran in parallel lines along its surface, seemed like ruts formed by the wheels of some gigantic chariot which had been driven down it. From the Görner Grat you can simply see across the glacier, and get a sideway view of its length; but the panorama of the mountains around is more complete and extensive. This it is that gives the Görner Grat its superiority.

The Riffelhorn is, as its name implies, a lofty peak of bare rock which juts up like a horn, and it forms a very picturesque object towering above the glacier. As we stood at its base we surveyed with the deepest interest the scene around us, and MONTE ROSA itself, of which we then had a near view for the first time. Unfortunately the summit was to-day hidden by the clouds which still clung round it, although they had cleared away from the tops of the neighbouring mountains. The view was in other respects magnificent, and we felt in a state of exultation at having persevered in our expedition, and that we were so well rewarded. After remaining nearly an hour,

we descended on foot by a different path. We first walked along the ridge of the Riffelberg towards the north till we came to a spot which overlooked the Findelen Glacier and commanded a fine view of the valley of Zermatt, the little village being seen at our feet. The path down was steep, and then, turning to the left, we proceeded to the lower extremity of the Görner Glacier, which here forms a vast ice cavern, out of which the Visp torrent rushes with prodigious force and a large volume of water. This lower end of the glacier is surrounded to its very margin with meadows, flowers, and trees; and the contrast thus made between the enormous mass of ice and the luxuriant vegetation which fringes it is very striking. This proximity of the meadows to the ice is occasioned by the glacier having recently advanced farther down into the valley and thrust itself into the very midst of the cultivated land, like a ploughshare.

We then proceeded towards Zermatt, crossed the Zmutt torrent, and reached our hotel at 6 P.M. A fine evening followed, and, as we looked out of the window, we saw Mont Cervin shining like a mass of molten silver in the moonlight.

From the position of Zermatt, its environs are admirably adapted to afford a view of the fine evening effect which is so often exhibited by the Monte Rosa chain at sunset. The last rays of the sun, when they have already quitted the lower landscape, may then be observed

still crimsoning the north-western side of the crest of Mont Cervin, whilst the moon is pouring her soft and silvery beams on the eastern face of the mountain, which would otherwise be dark with shade. There are few travellers who have visited Zermatt without having witnessed, with intense delight, this interesting conflict between the declining power of day and the encroaching dominion of night waged on the sublimest, though not the loftiest, summit of the Alps. Mr. George Barnard, who as a painter of Alpine scenery is unexcelled in truthfulness, has in one of his pictures given this peculiar effect with great felicity; but the sketch from it which adorns this book can, on account of its small size, only imperfectly indicate the admirable drawing and colouring of his original work; and even that, despite all his skill, gives but a faint reflex of the unapproachable sublimity of the scene itself viewed under such an aspect.

Aug. 26.—The day was again magnificent, and almost cloudless. At 8 A.M. we started on an excursion to the Schwartz See, a little mountain tarn placed immediately at the base of Mont Cervin, and commanding a fine view of that remarkable mountain and of the whole of the Monte Rosa chain. I found no difficulty in riding up in two hours and a half. There is a little chapel near the Schwartz See, and as we ascended we met the peasants returning from mass; also two priests who had been officiating: one was the curé of Zermatt, a tall, intelligent-looking man, the other came from Täsch.

MONT CERVIN.

M & N. HANHART, LITH.

They stopped, we had a little chat with them, and found them very polite and agreeable. We were again, on reaching our destination, lost in wonder at Mont Cervin, that immense obelisk of rock which rises here in one sheer flight of more than 7000 feet from the lower Zmutt Glacier. We were highly fortunate this morning, for not a single cloud interfered with the magnificent view on any side. We remained between two and three hours enjoying the panorama from a ridge a little above the Schwartz See, which is about 6500 feet above the sea level. We employed the time very pleasantly in sketching and lunching, but the guides seemed to find the former part of our occupation rather dull, and composed themselves to sleep. Notwithstanding the fine view we had of the Monte Rosa chain and glaciers, Mont Cervin was the principal object of our admiration. For sublimity, picturesqueness, and remarkable grace of form, it is the most surprising and interesting of all the Swiss mountains. To tell the truth, the view of Monte Rosa itself rather disappointed us at first sight. It was now free from clouds, and towered majestically above the glaciers at its feet; but as the Breithorn and the Lyskamm, both most noble mountains, were nearer to us, they appeared even loftier than Monte Rosa, and it required an effort of the mind, and some education of the eye, to be able to appreciate the real height of the latter. Indeed, everything here is on so colossal a scale, and every object so

positively large, that it requires a regular training to be able to understand at a glance the relative proportions of these giants of the Alps, and make due allowance for perspective and distance. It was impossible, however, not to be fully impressed with the grandeur of the magnificent sweep of the Görner Glacier, which is seen best of all from this point. Above it, on its right bank, rose the dark and singular-looking pyramid of the

Monte Rosa, from the Schwartz See.

Riffelhorn, under which we had stood yesterday, but which now looked insignificant when compared with the snowy mountains on the opposite side.

We returned by way of Zmutt, in order to have a better view of the western side of Mont Cervin. From

this place the crest of the mountain is not so striking as when seen from the Schwartz See, but a more extensive survey is obtained of its broad and immense base, which itself rests on elevated land, many thousand feet above the level of the sea. Before reaching Zmutt we crossed a frail wooden bridge at a great height above the Zmutt torrent, which here bursts with tremendous force through a narrow channel between lofty rocks—truly a Devil's Bridge. Aloft, in the very sky, is seen the aspiring crest of Mont Cervin, and a fearful chasm yawns below, whilst fine woods of fir and larch fringe the lower portions of the landscape. The descent there is very steep, but the whole way continued to be so charming and wonderful that it was almost impossible to feel, certainly quite impossible to acknowledge, fatigue. We reached Zermatt at 4 P.M. During the night the view of Mont Cervin by moonlight was again magnificent.

After a day spent among the Alps, when the mind has become intensely excited at the glorious appearance of the vast height and enormous bulk of the principal mountains, it is a great tranquilliser to reflect on what the philosophers, in their matter-of-fact way, state about the real magnitude of the objects which have so much moved our wonder. The following description is by no less an authority than Sir John Herschel:—

"The inequalities on the earth's surface arising from mountains, valleys, buildings, &c., have been likened to the roughness on the rind of an orange, compared with its general mass; and the com-

parison is quite free from exaggeration. The highest mountain known does not exceed five miles in perpendicular elevation: this is only 1-1600th part of the earth's diameter; consequently, on a globe of sixteen inches in diameter, such a mountain would be represented by a protuberance of not more than one-hundredth part of an inch, which is about the thickness of ordinary drawing-paper. Now, as there is no entire continent, or even any very extensive tract of land, known, where the general elevation above the sea is any thing like half this quantity, it follows, that if we would construct a correct model of our earth, with its seas, continents, and mountains, on a globe sixteen inches in diameter, the whole of the land, with the exception of a few prominent points and ridges, must be comprised on it within the thickness of thin writing-paper: and the highest hill would be represented by the smallest visible grain of sand."

CHAPTER III.

THE PASS OF THE GREAT ST. BERNARD AND THE VAL D'AOSTA.

Return to Visp — The Valley of the Rhone — The poet, Robert Montgomery, as travelling companion — Martigny — Ill-treatment of travellers there — A bad muleteer — Ascent of the Great St. Bernard — Anecdotes of Montgomery — Trick played by the muleteer — Arrival at the Hospice — Supper — The poet ejects the muleteer — Descent into the Val d'Aosta — Courmayeur and Mont Blanc — The Brenva Glacier — The Col du Géant and De Saussure — Glacier theories.

Aug. 27.—We were favoured by another fine morning; only a few light clouds were to be seen in the sky. We commenced our return to Visp at 7.20 A.M., *en route* for the Great St. Bernard. We had formed no just conception of the beauty of the valley of St. Nicholas when ascending it in bad weather to Zermatt, but every crag and mountain was now visible, and we looked back occasionally towards Zermatt to enjoy the magnificent views of the mountains we were leaving behind. Shortly after quitting St. Nicholas, where we dined, we had a fine distant prospect, towards the north, of the Oberland chain; but although the valley through which we were passing is flanked on either side by some of the loftiest mountains in Europe, for instance, the Weisshorn

on the west, and the Mischabel-hörner on the east, not one of them did we see from any point of the road, owing to the extreme depth and narrowness of the valley itself. This renders the journey up and down between Visp and Zermatt very tedious. We arrived at Visp at 7 P.M., and I was much fatigued, having preferred to walk the greater part of the way. Instead of proceeding on to Tourtemagne for the night, as prudence would have dictated, we again slept at this disagreeable, swampy village, in the midst of unwholesome, fever-giving marshes.

Aug. 28.—We left Visp at 1 P.M. by the diligence for Martigny, and had the *intérieur* entirely to ourselves until we reached Tourtemagne, where two Englishmen got in. One of them we afterwards discovered to be the Rev. Robert Montgomery, the poet; the other was a physician. In their agreeable society we beguiled the long journey with amusing conversation and anecdotes. We dined at Sion, which is a fine looking town, so far as the High Street is concerned, and well placed on a lofty eminence in the middle of the valley. Here two Frenchmen got into the diligence; one of them was a very fat fellow, and his appearance was so remarkable that we recognised him immediately as a person whom we had seen in one of the large public baths at Leukerbad. He seated himself between our two fellow-travellers, taking up plenty of room and affording many a joke, which he enjoyed as merrily as ourselves. At a stage beyond Sion we had a very long delay, and were

kept waiting for the arrival of the other diligence from Martigny, with which we were to make an exchange of horses and postilions. This delay was very irksome, and the comfort of the passengers was completely sacrificed. It now became dark; but at last, after much grumbling, we obtained our horses and proceeded on our journey. We reached Martigny at 10.10 P.M., and went to the Hôtel de la Poste. Our fellow-traveller, the Poet, appeared remarkably fond of a little controversy of any kind, and he had, in making the arrangements at the inn, plenty of opportunities afforded him for gratifying his taste, for we had a very bad set to deal with, and they required to be well scolded. Before engaging mules for the Great St. Bernard, he asked to see the tariff. The answer was that all the arrangements were under the management of a "Commissionnaire," who provided the mules, and that he was gone to bed. With this answer we were obliged to be satisfied till the morning.

Aug. 29.—Mr. Montgomery again made urgent inquiries this morning for the "Commissionnaire," but this functionary did not make his appearance, nor was it intended that he should. Presently a carriage with two mules was brought to the door to take us on our journey, but the carriage proved to be such a small and wretched vehicle, that four persons could not possibly ride in it. We remonstrated on being thus treated, and were told that three could ride inside and one

on the box, the guide riding as postilion. Three men from the stables then got into the carriage to show us, by ocular demonstration, that what was proposed was really possible, but we still insisted on having a larger carriage. At last the "Commissionnaire" was produced, and was well scolded by the three gentlemen. He was a poor, withered-looking old man, who was evidently put forward by others to bear the brunt of the storm. He acknowledged that the carriage was too small, and led the gentlemen to the remise, where he fished out another carriage, older and dirtier, but larger. This we were compelled to be content with; for nothing better was to be had, although we were charged exorbitantly. The fat landlord gave no assistance to his guests, but stood by and laughed. He no doubt was the person principally interested in supplying the mules and carriages. I believe we are not the only travellers who have had occasion to complain of the treatment received at Martigny. When we did at last make a start, our muleteer, who was a very unpromising looking Italian, drove the mules as slowly as possible, and kept telling us that we must alight at Liddes, as the carriage could go no farther. We however desired to go in the char as long as there was a good road. We stopped at Orsières for an hour and a half to rest the mules, and should have been detained there much longer, notwithstanding our remonstrances, had not one of our party fetched the mules out of the stable himself,

and insisted on proceeding. The mules were then put to, and the muleteer made them creep on to Liddes as slowly as possible, though they never once gave the slightest indication of being tired, and the road was fair enough. All our remonstrances were of no avail: and we found that if we did not quit the char at Liddes there was no chance of our arriving at the Hospice before midnight. We were 7 hours in going from Martigny to Liddes, including the stay of an hour and a half at Orsieres. At last, by the assistance of the master of the hotel at Liddes, our baggage was placed on one of the two mules which had drawn the char, and a sidesaddle on the other for me. The road was easy during the greater part of the way, and it is not difficult to understand that an army might have been led across it, even when the road over the pass was much worse than it is now.

When we still were between two and three hours from the top I alighted from my mule and walked. There are few things more delightful than to walk over a fine mountain-pass, with pleasant companions, in good weather. In these elevated regions the lightness of the air gives a buoyancy to the frame and an elasticity to the spirits; all sensation of fatigue is lost or forgotten, and conversation is never more agreeable than at such a time. Mr. Montgomery enlivened us by his sprightly sallies, and told some amusing anecdotes of his early career, two of which I recollect. When he was first

admitted into holy orders, he went as a curate to a rural district, and had to lodge there at the house of a small tenant-farmer, where the family were not very civilized. Notwithstanding his office of clergyman, they did not appear to hold him in high veneration, for the day after his arrival he heard the woman-servant call out to her mistress in the kitchen, "Missus, shall I feed the pigs first, or gie the mon his dinner?" The farmer would sometimes beat his wife, and even kick her; but on one occasion, when Mr. Montgomery heard of it, he took him severely to task for his brutality, and reproached him with much vehemence in the presence of his wife. The latter, unable to bear any longer the humiliation of her husband, interposed by exclaiming, "I assure you, Sir, he never kicks me till he has first taken off his shoes."

Whilst we were thus busily engaged in conversation our treacherous muleteer purposely lagged behind with the mules, and when he had thus managed to get out of call, though not out of sight, he seated himself with much composure in the saddle, and contrived always to remain at a distance behind, so that he might ride instead of myself. As we approached the summit it was becoming dusk, and a fog came on; but as I had become warm by walking, the risk of taking a chill made it dangerous to stop until the mules could overtake us, so that the muleteer's ruse was quite successful, and I was compelled to proceed on foot whilst he was

comfortably riding. Just before we reached the Hospice he pushed on and endeavoured to overtake us, in order that he might get me mounted again, and thus arrive in due form; but we were not disposed to gratify his punctilio in this respect, and we therefore walked on as fast as we could, and got there before him. The road, which had previously been tolerably easy, became very steep and rugged during the last hour and a half of the ascent. It seemed as if we should never reach the Hospice, and our impatience to arrive became so great that we sometimes thought we must have passed the building without observing it in the fog. We could not but reflect what, under more trying circumstances, must be the feelings of the poor creatures who become bewildered there in the snow-storms of winter, and would miserably perish except for the help afforded them by the good monks. The fog was so thick that we could scarcely see the Hospice when we arrived. It is a large, heavy stone building without any architectural pretensions, and its great height above the sea (8200 feet) makes it most unsuitable for the comfortable or healthy residence of human beings. De Saussure* has well remarked, that what increases the cold of this habitation is, that it is situated in a gorge pierced nearly from north-east to south-east, in the general direction of this portion of the Alps, and consequently in that of the winds also, which always keep a

* 'Voyages dans les Alpes,' Partie Pittoresque, p. 196.

direction parallel to that of the great mountain-chains. Thus, even in the height of summer, the least wind from the north always brings with it a degree of cold that is extremely disagreeable.

Two monks, young and gentlemanly men, came out immediately on our arrival, received us with the greatest kindness, led us to our rooms, and gave us the welcome intelligence that supper was ready! We at once felt ourselves at home. When our muleteer shortly afterwards arrived with the mules, he was severely reproached by some Oberland guides who had observed his proceedings, and he slunk away into some secluded corner, where we heard no more of him till the next morning. There was a large party at supper at the Hospice, including several ladies. Almost all the visitors were either English or American. There were only two monks at supper, and one sat at each end of the long table. The monk who presided at our end spoke English fluently, and we had a great deal of interesting and instructive conversation with him. He told us that during the late troubles in Switzerland, the revolutionary party took possession of the Hospice, and thirty "patriots" resided there for three months, drank all the wine, devoured large quantities of provisions, and plundered all the valuables, except the plate and the collection of ancient coins, which the monks had been discreet enough to send away and conceal. It was to a great extent owing to the exertions and interference of the

English foreign minister (Lord Palmerston) that the monks were restored to their Hospice and estates; but they were impoverished by the revolution, and talked of sending some of their fraternity on a visit to England to collect contributions.

Aug. 30.—Our muleteer, who had not had courage to show himself last night, knocked at our door, shortly after five this morning, and asked to be paid, as he was about to return to Martigny. He was then told that Mr. Montgomery and his friend were not going with us to Aosta, but intended to return with the mules to Martigny, where they might probably bring him to account before the proper authorities. He was greatly disturbed at this unwelcome intelligence, and shortly afterwards went to Mr. Montgomery's room to ascertain whether what had been told him was really true; but he pretended that his object was merely to ask at what hour the gentlemen would start. He intruded without permission into Mr. Montgomery's bedroom, the door being unlocked; but we very soon afterwards heard a tremendous scuffle occasioned by his being unceremoniously ejected by the excitable poet.

We engaged at the Hospice a very honest muleteer to convey our baggage on one of his return mules to St. Remy for three francs, and we walked down there. We saw the monks assembled this morning at their devotions in the chapel. All their establishment were now at the Hospice to celebrate the festival of St.

Augustine, to whose order they belong, and to settle and audit their annual accounts. There were very few other persons present in the chapel. We breakfasted, played with the dogs before the Hospice, chatted with the two monks who had received us on the previous evening, and then, after depositing our contribution in

View of the Hospice of the Great St. Bernard.

the box at the chapel, took our departure. We did not visit the Morgue, having no taste for the horrible. There was no snow on the pass itself. Adjoining the Hospice, on the Italian side, is a small lake, and immediately above this rises the plain of Jupiter, where a Roman

temple formerly stood. This lake is nearly a mile in circumference, and is liquid for only a few months in the year. The best view of the pass of the Great St. Bernard is from the southern end of this lake, where, on looking towards the Hospice, one sees rising above it the huge bulk of the lofty Mont Velan covered with perpetual snow.

The pass is easier on the Italian than on the Swiss side. As we descended from the Hospice we could not but observe the remarkable changes which appeared in the vegetation; first mosses only were visible, next the hardy pine and larch, then noble walnut and chestnut trees, and at last we found, in the rich and luxuriant valley of Aosta, abundant crops of Indian corn and trellised vines. It was very cold and a little foggy on the Great St. Bernard in the morning, but as we descended, we dived down into glorious sunshine.

The officers of the Sardinian Government inspected our passport and made a slight examination of our baggage at St. Remy. Here the muleteer got us a char and drove us along a pleasant but not remarkable road to the city of Aosta. From Aosta we proceeded the next day in a carriage to Courmayeur, at the foot of Mont Blanc, where we spent several delightful days, explored the Brenva Glacier, and ascended the Mont Saxe, which, although not so lofty as the Cramont, is nearer Mont Blanc, and, from its close proximity, commands a view of it, something like that which is

obtained of the Jungfrau from the summit of the Wengern Alp. None who visit the Val d'Aosta should omit going to Courmayeur and making the easy ascent of this mountain, as by doing so they will enjoy a superb view of Mont Blanc which is quite different from that presented at Chamounix. The great dome of the mountain spreads itself majestically in the air, and is

Mont Blanc, from the Mont Saxe.

flanked by the sharp-pointed and abrupt precipices of the rocky pyramid called Mont Péteret, while the enormous glacier of la Brenva may be traced to its origin among the snows which whiten the very summit of Mont Blanc. To the right may be seen the lofty Col du Géant, which leads from Courmayeur to Chamounix.

across prodigious ice-fields and among dangerous rocks. It was on this Col that De Saussure passed sixteen days and nights, encamped in the open air, and pursuing with ardour which knew no abatement his scientific investigations. He has left us a most interesting account of his long sojourn in this wild, inhospitable spot, for which indeed he seems in the end to have acquired almost an affectionate attachment, notwithstanding the hardships he encountered. Nothing can be more beautiful or touching than his description of the last evening that he passed there:—

"The 16th and last evening," he says, "that we passed on the Col du Géant was of the most bewitching beauty. It seemed that all these lofty summits were desirous that we should not quit them without regret. The cold wind which had rendered most of the evenings so uncomfortable did not, on this night, blow; the peaks which towered above us, and the snow-fields which divided them, were coloured with the most beautiful shades of rose and carmine; all the Italian horizon appeared enclosed within a vast girdle, above which the full moon had just risen with the majesty of a queen, and tinged with the finest vermilion. The air around us possessed the purity and perfect clearness which Homer attributes to that of Olympus, whilst the valleys, filled with the vapours condensed there, resembled an abode of thick gloom. But how shall I depict the night which succeeded to this beautiful evening, when, after twilight, the moon shining alone in the heavens shed her floods of silver light upon the vast circuit of snows and rocks which surrounded our cabin? What an astonishing and delightful spectacle did these tracts of ice and snow, whose aspect is insupportable under the light of the sun, present beneath the soft brightness of the luminary of night! What a magnificent contrast did these granite rocks, embrowned and scarped with so much distinctness and boldness, form in the midst of these brilliant snows! What a moment for meditation! For how many sufferings and privations do not

moments like these compensate! The soul becomes elevated; the views of the mind seem to enlarge; and in the midst of this majestic silence we seem to fancy ourselves listening to the voice of Nature, and becoming the confidants of her most secret operations."*

The Brenva Glacier, which forms so conspicuous an object on this, the less frequented side of Mont Blanc, is the source from which the Dora Baltea, or Doire, takes its origin; and accordingly some of the débris of this part of Mont Blanc finds its passage through the Val d'Aosta, along the bed of this rapid torrent. There are few places where the theory of glaciers could be better studied than on the Brenva Glacier. The large spot in the centre, which looks remarkably like an eye, is a precipitous rock,—indeed a kind of Tarpeian rock! for anything that has to pass over it must do so headlong. In the onward course of the glacier down the mountain, part of it has to get over this precipice, which is too steep to allow the ice to slide down it. Hence there is always a series of little avalanches in operation at this point, and they are particularly active and noisy during a hot summer's day. I am not about to discuss any of the theories respecting glaciers which have recently attracted so much attention on the part of the scientific world. Discoveries made on this subject have, as is well known, been in great measure the foundation of the well-deserved reputation of Professor Forbes, and the results of some new investigations have lately

* 'Voyages dans les Alpes,' Partie Pittoresque, p. 278.

formed the subject of several lectures by Professor Tyndal at the Royal Institution. In my own mind glacier theories are indissolubly associated with my recollections of the Brenva Glacier; for it was on the occasion of a long and delightful day spent in exploring it in company with some friends, one of them a distinguished member of the Royal Society, and both friends of Humboldt, that I heard the glacier theories first spoken of, and received instruction about the important subjects of glacier-motion, ice-tables, veined structure, lateral and terminal moraines, and the like. These topics are very interesting, and invest every glacier with something to think and talk about beyond its mere external beauty. I had always before been accustomed to regard glaciers simply as charming objects in a landscape, without troubling myself further concerning them, being in the mood of which the poet declares himself—

> "Contented if he might enjoy
> The things which others understand."*

This disposition is a happy one; but whilst pleading guilty to it, I acknowledge that the traveller who widens the range of topics which interest him must always experience increased pleasure in an Alpine journey. I would therefore recommend every one who visits the Alps to give some little previous study to glacier theories.

* Wordsworth.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VAL FORMAZZA, THE GRIES PASS, AND THE ÆGGISCH-HORN (FIRST VISIT).

Weather-bound at Airolo — Thomas and his horse "Fritz" — The Val di Bedretto — The Chapel of St. Giacomo — The Falls of the Tosa — An-der-Matten in Val Formazza — The Gries Pass — A fall on the glacier — Eagles and Lämmer-geyer — The Eginenthal — Chamois visible — A woman killed — Münster — The Æggisch-horn — Hôtel de la Jungfrau — Early rising rewarded — View from the summit of the Æggisch-horn — Mists and echoes — Return to the Hotel — The travellers' fever — Sudden start for Brieg.

Our second visit to Monte Rosa was made in the autumn of 1856. On that occasion we crossed the St. Gothard Pass to Airolo, where we were weatherbound for a couple of days, and we made there the acquaintance of an American gentleman, Mr. F—, who, like ourselves, intended to cross by the Gries Pass to the valley of the Rhone, and visit the Æggisch-horn and Zermatt. This gentleman became our travelling companion during the next fortnight; and his society proved so agreeable that we ceased to regret the bad weather which had detained us at Airolo.

We hired a horse at the inn at Airolo to take me across the Gries Pass, but the animal supplied was clumsy, and unsuited to carry a lady, and we finally converted him into a baggage horse. Our American friend had an

excellent horse with him called "Fritz," which he had brought to Airolo on the preceding day, accompanied by the owner, Thomas Nessier* of Münster (Vallais). Fortunately for us Mr. F—, who was making his first Swiss tour, feeling some distrust in his walking powers, had hired this horse at Meyringen, but he speedily found that such assistance was unnecessary, and he never rode at all after joining us. The services of "Fritz" were therefore transferred to me, and I would not wish for a more sure-footed, clever, good-tempered creature. Thomas also proved himself to be a very shrewd, active, and trustworthy fellow.

We left Airolo at 7 A.M. on the 4th of September. Airolo is at the foot of the St. Gothard Pass, on the Italian side, and is 3629 feet above the sea-level. During the bad and tempestuous weather of the two preceding days, we found the place piercingly cold; but the storm had now cleared off, and the temperature became warmer. We proceeded up the beautiful Val di Bedretto, to the west of Airolo, holding our course along the right bank of the stream which leads to the Nufenen Pass. We found the mountains covered with fresh snow, upon which the sun now shone brightly. At about 9.20 A.M. we passed, on our left hand, a cleft in the mountains, in which, at a great elevation, we could perceive a small glacier of the most brilliant colour, with an enormous ice cavern distinctly visible.

* He is to be found during the summer at the Reichenbach Hotel, Meyringen.

It formed a most beautiful object, and we stopped some minutes examining it through our glasses; but it was placed at so prodigious a height that it seemed quite inaccessible. At 10 A.M., after three hours' walking, we arrived at the little dirty-looking inn at All' Acqua, which is 4830 feet above the sea: here we rested on the green turf outside, but did not venture within the inn. The landlord told us that he had crossed the Nufenen Pass the day before, in a perfect hurricane, and that he never recollected encountering such a severe storm, though he had frequently crossed the pass in bad weather in February and March. After having rested about an hour, we started again on our journey, and then, turning to the left, we ascended the mountain-chain which separates the Val di Bedretto from the Val Formazza—thus we left the Nufenen Pass on our right hand. At this point we had to climb a very steep ascent, thickly covered with rhododendrons and bilberries, and it was with great difficulty that the horses could get up some parts of it. Here I dismounted, and walked for some time. At 1 P.M. we reached the little chapel of St. Giacomo, near the summit of the pass, and had on our way a beautiful view of the Finster Aar-horn. We then began to descend into the Val Formazza, and at about 3.30 P.M. reached the falls of the Tosa, or Toccia. These falls are not perpendicular in their descent, but the water tumbles with headlong violence over a series of ledges of rock about

80 feet broad, and of great steepness, which keep breaking it into foam as it leaps amidst clouds of spray from ridge to ridge to a depth of nearly 500 feet. The roaring of the water is tremendous. With the exception of Schaffhausen, there is no waterfall in Switzerland that has a larger body of water; and its effect, when viewed from below, is very striking. All the scenery above the falls is of a desolate character; but the Val Formazza is seen below, stretching downwards into scenes of most exquisite beauty, and is richly wooded. It was 5.30 P.M. before we reached the little inn at An-der-Matten, called Albergo del Caval bianco. We found here only rough accommodation, but it was quite endurable; and we were informed that there was nothing better in the district. The language of the inhabitants of the upper part of this valley is German, but below Fopiano they speak Italian. Every village has two names, a German and an Italian, and the traveller is therefore often sorely puzzled.

Sept. 5.—We left An-der-Matten at 7 A.M., and, retracing our steps, ascended the valley as far as the small chapel of St. Lorenzo, above the falls of the Tosa. It took us a couple of hours to reach this chapel, including the time spent in examining the falls. We then turned to the left, and proceeded towards the Gries Pass: we reached the foot of the glacier at 11.30 A.M. Here we rested for about a quarter of an hour, and then crossed a portion of the glacier over

smooth ice, very little crevassed. The fresh snow that had fallen enabled the horses to cross the glacier without difficulty, though not without a trifling accident. A French count and countess, who had been staying the previous night at the little inn at An-der-Matten, were crossing the pass at the same time as ourselves, and the horses seemed to have so good a footing on the glacier that they, like myself, did not dismount on reaching the ice. Their guide, however, was not so well acquainted with the pass as our trusty Thomas, and took them a little out of the course which we were pursuing. Nothing could exceed the care and caution displayed by Thomas as we crossed the glacier: he went before "Fritz," and pounded down the snow to make a firm footing for him wherever it was required. Whilst I was watching his operations, I suddenly heard a scream from the Countess, and, on looking round, saw that the Count's mule had fallen with his rider, and that both were floundering in the soft snow. Fortunately the gentleman was not hurt, but only a little shaken. He was up again in an instant, and scolded the guide with such violent gesticulations that I feared he was going to beat him. Taking warning by his mischance, I quickly alighted, and crossed the rest of the glacier on foot: this I did without any difficulty, though Murray does say that this "is not a pass for ladies." We were only twenty minutes in crossing the glacier, which is 7900 feet above the level of the sea. The

day was remarkably clear, and we had a fine view of the wild and solitary scene around us. As we passed along we found ourselves traversing a snowy tract in the midst of the most rugged desolation. Grand and stern looking bare precipices rose above the glacier to an enormous height. Silence and solitude prevailed. Above the mountains large birds of prey were repeatedly seen soaring in majestic flight, but at too great a height for us to distinguish their species with any certainty. This is one of the spots often frequented by the great vulture of the Alps, the Lämmer-geyer; but all I could learn from the guides, in answer to my inquiries, was, that the birds we saw were "raub-vögel." One, however, I made out, at least to my own satisfaction, to be an eagle; it was accompanied by one of its young, which it was instructing in all kinds of manœuvres in the air, and I watched them for a long time with much interest. Indeed, I was struck, during the whole of our journey from Airolo to the valley of the Rhone, with the great number of large "robber-birds" everywhere visible, and I think this may be noted as one of the peculiarities of the Gries Pass. As a general rule very few birds of any kind are seen among the Alps.

Immediately after leaving the glacier we began a rapid descent, and at about 1 P.M. we found a sheltered spot below, where we rested and had lunch. Near the place where we sat down there were some large boulder-

stones, from which hung long pointed icicles, like stalactites; some of them were three or four feet long. We broke off one or two, and used them to ice our wine. We were much struck with their extreme lightness and brittleness. What appeared to the eye to be a considerable mass of ice, felt, when held in the hand, as light as pith. At 2.10 P.M. we again started, and had a tremendously steep descent into the Eginenthal. Down this valley the stream we were following flows, until it reaches the Rhone at a point not far below the source of the latter.

On going down the Eginenthal we met with two incidents, which excited in our minds very different feelings. We were descending the upper part of the valley, and were looking across the ravine to the mountains which form the opposite side, when the quick eye of our worthy Thomas discovered two chamois. They were quietly observing us with the greatest composure, and seemed to be quite satisfied that, being separated from us by the river and ravine, they were in perfect safety. We examined them through our glasses with the utmost curiosity and delight, for it was the first time we had seen any chamois in a wild state on their native mountains. We watched them for more than twenty minutes; but, although they were not frightened, they were a little uneasy at our presence. They moved slowly up the mountain, stopping at times to feed, and occasionally turned round to gaze upon us,

and ascertain that we were not meditating mischief. They continued in this way to ascend the mountain with great deliberation, until they were at last hidden from sight behind some trees and brushwood, and we then recommenced our journey. As we went along we expatiated on the pleasure which so excellent a view of these beautiful creatures had afforded us, and as we did so, Thomas, who was highly elated, frequently interrupted us by exclaiming, "It was I who first saw them!"

Our second incident was of a different and mournful character. We had reached the lower part of the Eginenthal, and were rapidly approaching Ulrichen, in the valley of the Rhone, when we observed on the other side of the stream, at the distance of about half a mile, an unusual concourse of people, who were winding their way up the opposite mountain in a kind of procession. We inquired at some châlets as to the cause of this, and learned that an unfortunate woman from Ulrichen, who had been tending a herd of cows, had incautiously approached too close to the brink of a precipice, and had fallen over and been killed. The procession consisted of some of the villagers, accompanied by the curé, who was going to administer the last rite of the Roman Catholic Church, if a spark of life yet remained in the poor woman. We learned, on arriving at the village, that her husband was absent on some expedition, and that she had left two little children.

This sad affair cast a gloom over what had been, in other respects, a delightful excursion. We felt thankful that we, who were less accustomed to the mountains, had been preserved from accident, whilst this poor woman, whose life had been passed amongst them, and who was following her ordinary avocations, had met with her death so suddenly.

It was 4 P.M. when we reached Ulrichen, and at 5.30 P.M. we arrived safely at Münster, where we found a very comfortable inn. We slept at Münster, and on the following day went down the valley of the Rhone as far as Viesch, which is at the foot of the Æggisch-horn. We were not aware, until after we had started on this expedition, that there was any hotel on the Æggisch-horn itself, and we had taken for granted that we should be obliged to sleep at Viesch; but we now learned, to our great surprise and delight, that an excellent mountain inn had just been opened at a point about three-parts up the mountain, and that it was kept by one of the most intelligent and civil landlords in Switzerland. Our visit to the Æggisch-horn, a place which has now become so great a favourite with travellers, was the result of a careful study of the map, which had convinced us that the summit of this mountain must, from its position immediately above the great Aletsch Glacier, command a most splendid view, and we were not disappointed in our expectations. We were about two hours and a half in going from

Viesch to the Hôtel de la Jungfrau on the Æggisch-horn. The day was excessively warm, and, although a great part of the way proceeds through a thick forest, which affords a delightful shade, the noontide heat in which we made our journey was most oppressive. About half way up the mountain we crossed a ravine in which there is a beautiful little rivulet, and my companions on foot partook of some of the crystal stream with the greatest satisfaction, having first duly qualified it with kirschwasser.

Von Tschudi, in his delightful book,* frequently expatiates on the magnificence of the trees of Switzerland; but the traveller who has seen the majestic forests of the Pyrenees must experience some feeling of disappointment when he finds in Switzerland very few trees, except varieties of the fir, and those not generally remarkable for their size. One must, however, admit that on the Æggisch-horn the grandeur of the lofty trees harmonizes with the scenery amidst which they are placed. Nowhere have I seen firs of more prodigious height and vaster girth than some of those which clothe the sides of the Æggisch-horn. Before emerging from the forest I observed great numbers of the yellow spotted gentian (*Gentiana punctata*); they had already flowered, and were in seed, but must, a little earlier in the season, have presented a most beautiful appearance. The ascent of the Æggisch-horn is by a good horse-path,

* 'Sketches of Nature in the Alps.'

which is extremely steep in many places. There are few walks more fatiguing on a hot day. A sledge-path also leads in a direct line down the mountain, and is used for the transport of dairy produce to Viesch; but it is too steep for pedestrians, except when they are descending.

On reaching the Hôtel de la Jungfrau, the landlord warmly welcomed us, conducted us to the best rooms in his then half-built inn, and made us as comfortable as he could. He is an Italian, and was delighted to talk in his native language with our American companion. He could not then speak English, but has since visited our country and learned our language, as an additional means of making himself agreeable to English travellers. In the evening the stove in the *salle-à-manger* smoked, a fault which has since been remedied; and therefore, as it was too cold to sit without a fire at so great an elevation, we went down into the guides' room below, which was equally large, and there the genial warmth of a wood fire was really quite enjoyable, though, during the day, we had suffered so much from the heat. The landlord, guides, and porters played at cards at an adjoining table, and none seemed in the least degree disturbed by our presence, whilst we, equally at our ease, wrote letters; and then my companions in turn selected and read aloud some favourite sonnets from a pocket edition of Shakespere. The landlord assured us that if we intended to see the view

on the following morning from the summit of the mountain, it would, at that season, be necessary to be there at daybreak, before the mists arose from the valley, which they always do shortly after the sun has risen.

Sept. 7.—We were awakened by our alarum at a quarter to 4 A.M., had a hasty breakfast, and left the hotel by 5.10 A.M. The gentlemen walked as usual, and I rode "Fritz." After ascending for above thirty-five minutes we had a fine view of the Strahlhorn and Weisshorn, and beyond them, in the far distance, which the rising sun had just reached, the stately form of Mont Cervin, or the Matterhorn, was also visible.

I shall never forget the beauty of that morning, from the moment when the first streak of dawn heralded the approach of the sun till he rose majestically above the horizon. The clear blue sky went through every gradation of colour, each seeming more lovely than the one by which it was preceded. It was a sky as impossible to describe as to forget.

At 6 A.M. I dismounted, for "Fritz" could go no farther, and I accompanied the gentlemen on foot the rest of the way, which is excessively steep. The path winds upwards amongst large blocks of stone, which form a kind of staircase to the summit. This I reached at 6.55 A.M., without once requiring any assistance. At the top Mr. F—, who was the first to arrive there, offered his hand to assist me up the last few steps over the huge smooth blocks of stone of which the highest

peak is composed, but I saucily declined the proffered help, as, had I accepted it, I should not have been able to say that I had ascended without assistance. This I was anxious to do, for Murray, speaking of the Æggisch-horn, says, "This is a new expedition, just beginning to be known, and is a fatiguing day for ladies; few would attempt to climb the horn, and indeed the view is not so greatly superior to that from the lower ridge as to make it essential to incur the additional fatigue."* In this opinion I do not at all concur; for I not only climbed up, but also came down again, without any other aid than that of my trusty Alpen-stock and the occasional assistance afforded by my taking hold of the rocks on the side of the path. I must also add that, to my taste, the view from the summit of the horn is so immeasurably superior to what can be seen from below, that no one ought to be content with the view from the lower ridge who has strength to climb for an hour, and has a head steady enough to enjoy the view from this surprising pinnacle. On reaching the summit, one's first difficulty is to discover a secure resting-place from which to make observations, for there is no level spot on which to stand; but having done this, I found myself poised on a pile of huge, loose rocks, which are heaped together on the top of the mountain in so strange a fashion that one wonders the heap does not separate and tumble down on

* 'Handbook for Switzerland,' 7th edition, p. 99.

the Aletsch Glacier below. This feeling of insecurity is however soon forgotten, and the mind becomes absorbed in admiration and delight at the wonderful view. This is almost unparalleled in extent and variety. It embraces the range of the Bernese Alps on the north, and that of the Monte Rosa chain on the south. The Æggisch-horn is placed between these two magnificent chains of mountains, and at an immense depth below, at one's very feet, lies the great Aletsch Glacier, stretching away in an unbroken expanse for about twenty miles long and perhaps two or three wide. On the southern edge of this glacier is the small lake called Märjelen See, which is of a deep blue colour, with icebergs of the purest white floating about in it. On every side arise snowy peaks of the highest mountains.

After the first burst of delight, we sat down to examine more deliberately the extensive prospect. We were now about 9000 feet above the level of the sea, and 6000 above Viesch, in the valley of the Rhone. We saw towards the south, with the greatest distinctness and clearness, Monte Leone, the Weisskopf, the Mischabel-hörner, with their highest summit called the Dom very conspicuous; then, more remote, the Strahlhorn; and, in the extreme distance, Monte Rosa, very small. Next we saw the Mont Cervin rising grandly in the distance, and next the elegant and lofty Weisshorn. On turning towards the north, we had immediately opposite, and in close proximity, the noble Aletsch-

horn, separated from us merely by the intervening Aletsch Glacier. Beyond the Aletsch-horn we saw, with remarkable clearness, the Bernese Alps, including the Jungfrau, without a cloud, the Mönch, and the Eiger. Farther to the right hand we saw the mountains called the Vallis-Viescher-hörner, and the summits of the Finster-Aarhorn and the Ober-Aarhorn. To the west we saw, at a vast distance, but most distinctly, the well-known form of Mont Blanc. To the east we looked up the valley of the Rhone towards the Furka and Gries. Thirty-four glaciers are visible from the summit of the Æggisch-horn, and form important features in the prospect.

We would gladly have spent several hours here, enjoying the magnificent panorama, and impressing its beauty more indelibly on our memories, but at 8 A.M. the mists began to rise from the valleys like steam, and soon interfered with the view, which had, till then, been uninterrupted. These mists rapidly increased, and hid from us all but occasional glimpses of the snowy chains which a few minutes before had been seen in the clear bright light of glorious sunshine. As soon as the mists reached and enveloped us, the air became very cold. Mr. F—'s Oberland guide, who was not well, had been trying for some time to shelter himself from the wind, and now looked so cold and wretched that we hastened to descend. At 8.30 A.M. we left the peak, and in an hour and a half descended to the inn. As we scrambled down the steep

path we tried our voices against the abrupt precipices above us, and discovered several echoes with which we amused ourselves again and again, and we longed to have one of the famous buglers from the Lakes of Killarney—that paradise of harmonious echoes. At our *déjeuner* the landlord supplied, among other delicacies, a roast marmot, served hot. Its flavour is not wholly unlike hare, but the food is decidedly too rich for the digestion of ordinary mortals.

We were so perfectly comfortable in our little mountain inn, that we had made arrangements for staying there at all events till the next day, if not for one or two days longer; but we now found ourselves suddenly attacked with what I must call "the traveller's fever." This is an irresistible impulse which forbids all tranquil repose, and compels one to move onwards in search of new adventures. No sooner therefore had we finished breakfast than we began to discuss whether we should not immediately proceed to Brieg, and sleep there, and go to Zermatt on the following morning. The weather was unsettled, our fellow-traveller's time was limited, and so, after a short debate, we determined to start. One difficulty stood in our way; we had given out some linen to be washed, which was not to be ready till the next morning. When, however, our obliging landlord understood that we had changed our plans, and wished to leave his hotel earlier than originally intended, he behaved in the politest manner,

and did everything in his power to facilitate our immediate departure. The linen was speedily brought to us, washed and dried; our packages were made ready, and at noon we started from the inn and walked down the mountain towards Viesch, the landlord bidding us adieu with as much cheerfulness as when he had welcomed our arrival. We walked gently down and reached Viesch in an hour and three quarters. Thomas had been sent forward some time before, with "Fritz," bearing the baggage; and, as there is a carriage-road from Viesch to Brieg, we directed him to hire a char for us, to be ready on our arrival.

At 2 P.M. Thomas drove up in a char, "Fritz" being converted for the occasion into a coach-horse. But although our gallant steed took us along the road at a very fair pace, we had no reason to be very delighted with the carriage, which was a kind of long, narrow cart without springs. The benches on which we sat were suspended on pieces of leather which broke the jolts, but as soon as we put our feet to the bottom of the vehicle, we felt as if they would be shaken to pieces by the vibration and bumping. We were therefore very glad when, after a drive of two hours and a half, we at last reached Brieg. The road was rough in many places, but has since been much improved, and may now be pronounced good. Some part of the scenery through which it passes is highly interesting. Shortly before arriving at Naters we crossed a bridge

over the Massa torrent, which here falls into the Rhone. It comes streaming down from the southern end of the great Aletsch Glacier, and is the principal outlet by which the water which streams from those enormous icefields is drained off. We felt extremely tempted to stay on our route, and explore this valley upwards to the glacier, which would certainly have brought us to scenes of great grandeur and interest, though little explored. Time, however, would not permit, nor was the weather very propitious; for rainy clouds began to gather above our heads, and a few slight showers fell before we reached our destination. Brieg is an ugly old town at the foot of the Simplon Pass. The inns there are dirty, ancient, inconvenient buildings, and the people who keep them are not very attentive to travellers. But the town is high, dry and wholesome, and therefore affords safer sleeping quarters than can generally be obtained in the valley of the Rhone.

CHAPTER V.

TO ZERMATT (SECOND VISIT), AND FROM ZERMATT TO MATTMARKSEE BY THE VALLEYS OF ST. NICHOLAS AND SAAS.

From Visp to Zermatt — Italian guides — Improved accommodation at Zermatt — A quiet day on the Riffelberg — The lost horseshoe replaced — The lost brooch found — Return to Zermatt — Inconveniently tame sheep — Second Visit to the Schwartz See — The Zmutt Glacier — Journey to St. Nicholas — Suggestions for the better exploration of the country round Zermatt — Return to Stalden — Ascent of the Valley of Saas — Herr Imseng, the Curé of Saas — The Allelein Glacier — Mattmarksee in the dusk of evening — The Inn there.

Sept. 8.—We left Brieg this morning shortly after seven o'clock, and an hour's drive in a char brought us to Visp. As we approached this village we could not fail to observe in what a marsh it is placed. The site was no doubt selected for the purpose of the inhabitants deriving profit from the traffic on the Simplon road, and Visp is advantageously situated, in that respect, on the level; but if the inhabitants had considered their health or that of their visitors, they would have established themselves on the shoulder of the hill at a height sufficient to lift them up into a purer atmosphere. The landlord of the Hôtel de la Poste, which has been rebuilt since our former visit here, seemed very disap-

pointed when he found that we were not going to stay at his house, and begged that we would leave any luggage there that we did not require to take with us. However, we declined to avail ourselves of his offer, for we had determined not to return to Visp at all if the weather would permit us to cross the Moro, and we were not disposed, under any circumstances, to sleep there again; for I entirely attribute a malaria fever, from which I suffered shortly after our former visit to Zermatt, to having slept at Visp.

On arriving at Visp we looked out for a porter to carry our baggage to St. Nicholas, where we expected to pass the night. Presently three guides, who had come from the Val Tournanche with a party over the St. Théodule Pass, and were returning, accosted us and offered their services. They asked ten francs to carry the baggage to St. Nicholas, but only eight were offered them, which they refused. They appeared to consider that we should be compelled to employ them on their own terms, and they pretended to leave Visp, going, however, only a short distance on the road to Stalden. We were determined to show our independence and resist what we considered imposition; for the baggage was not more than what one strong Swiss porter could easily carry, and four francs a day is ample pay for a porter when there is no retour. Accordingly we had all the baggage put on "Fritz," and we then (at 9 A.M.) left Visp, and began in high glee to walk towards

Stalden. The guides, who were extremely disappointed when they saw me walking, came again shortly afterwards, and offered their services on more reasonable terms and in a more respectful manner; but they were told that as I had begun to walk, I should at all events do so as far as Stalden. They would not, however, leave us, but followed at a short distance and in great debate among themselves.

At Visp, Mr. F— parted with his Oberland guide, who continued to be rather unwell, and whose services were no longer necessary, for Thomas was perfectly acquainted with the route and with Zermatt. We were amused to observe how, after a short experience of mountain-travelling in Switzerland, our American friend had gradually become disencumbered of the retinue which he had with him when we first met. He was then provided with a horse and two men to accompany him on his way, but "Fritz" and his master were soon transferred to me, and the services of the guide were now dispensed with. A single porter was able to carry all his baggage as well as our own. There is nothing in travelling that more conduces to equanimity of mind than being able to go along in light marching order, unembarrassed by the trouble and expense of guides and attendants. I enjoyed my walk to Stalden very much, though the path was a steep one. We chatted gaily, and ornamented our hats with bright barberries, and flowers plucked from a plant which Mr. F— called the balloon

vine. It bears a bright orange flower, enveloping a sort of cherry. I believe it is not uncommon, though I never recollect meeting with it except in the valley of St. Nicholas, and on the hill overlooking the Danube on which the Valhalla stands. Occasionally my companions brought me some sprigs of the bilberry, covered with purple fruit, and sometimes a few wild strawberries; and as the day was warm, it was impossible to resist such tempting gifts. It has often proved a drawback to my pleasure in Alpine travelling, to find myself mounted, in solitary grandeur, on a horse, while my companions were trudging before on foot, and I was thus out of reach of much of the conversation going on; but to-day I enjoyed for a long time the pleasures of a pedestrian, and shared in all the animated discussions which enlivened the route.

At Stalden the three guides from Val Tournanche were again urgent to be allowed to carry our baggage; and Mr. F—, who took a delight in teasing them, coolly offered them merely a couple of francs to carry it to St. Nicholas, which, after some demur, they reluctantly accepted. I then again mounted "Fritz," and we proceeded to St. Nicholas, where we arrived at 1.45 P.M. Finding that we had then the whole afternoon before us, and were not fatigued, we determined to go on to Zermatt. We stopped at St. Nicholas for an hour and a half to lunch and rest the horse; and there, to our great satisfaction, we got rid of the three Italian guides, and hired

in their stead a strong Swiss porter, who with ease carried to Zermatt all the baggage which the three Italians had divided among them, and had even then complained of it as being too heavy. At 3¼ P.M. we left St. Nicholas. This village bore many traces of the violence of the earthquake which had visited the district in the preceding year. Some of the houses were completely tumbled over into heaps of ruins. Thomas told us that at the moment when the principal shock took place, he was returning from Zermatt to Visp, and was driving "Fritz" before him on a narrow path at a great height above the stream. Suddenly he experienced a dreadful shock, and saw poor "Fritz" completely thrown from his feet over the steep slope, at the bottom of which is the furious torrent, in which nothing could live for a minute. He thought at first that the world was coming to an end, and felt disposed to resign himself to his fate; but "Fritz," who had rolled over on his side, struggled violently to save himself among the bushes and trees which kept him from rolling into the water. Thomas at last recovered his scattered senses, and rushing to the assistance of the poor animal, succeeded in rescuing him from his place of danger.

At 7 P.M. we came in sight of the lower end of the great Görner Glacier, which, commencing at Monte Rosa, stretches along for several miles in its downward course, and thrusts itself finally, like a huge wedge of ice, amidst the green meadows of the Zermatt

valley. It was quite dark when, at 8 P.M., we arrived at Zermatt. It had been getting darker and darker for about three-quarters of an hour previously. It is always disagreeable to travel in the dark, particularly in mountainous regions. The torrent roared below, and threatened to sweep us away if a false step were taken. We were therefore heartily glad when we reached the village. The clouds which had protected us from the sun during the journey had lessened our fatigue, though they did not improve the prospect.

The road along which we had passed was frequently disfigured by bare slopes formed of loose rocks and heaps of earth and stones recently fallen from the mountains above, or washed down by torrents of rain. We again pronounced the journey from Visp to Zermatt to be long and tedious. The scenery never rises to sublimity, though it is always beautiful; but the vegetation is of a northern character, hard and sterile. How unlike what we afterwards met with in the Italian valleys! We found that Zermatt itself was still, as we had seen it six years before, a miserable village; but two new and excellent hotels had been built there, besides a nice little mountain inn on the Riffelberg itself. Lauber's little wooden house had disappeared. The Hôtel Mont Cervin, which is now the principal inn, is a large and commodious building. We, however, went to the Hôtel Monte Rosa, which, though smaller, is also very good. This hotel and that on the Riffel-

berg are kept by two brothers who are partners; and it is extremely convenient to be able to change one's quarters from the one house to the other as may best suit the day's excursion.

Sept. 9.—Our friend Mr. F—, who was full of enthusiasm at this his first visit to Monte Rosa, was up early in the morning, and started at once for the Riffel, where we had promised to follow him. Feeling a little tired, and having plenty of time, we did not leave Zermatt until 10.30 A.M. The morning was misty in the valley, and we were under some apprehension that we should see nothing of the mountains to-day; but by the time we started the mist had cleared off, and the day soon became magnificent. Once more, as we ascended the Riffel, we enjoyed a splendid view of Mont Cervin, towering aloft in the sky without a cloud. At 12.50 P.M. we reached the hotel. The gallant "Fritz" carried me up the steep ascent of the Riffel with the greatest ease. He had frequently been there before, and knew every step of the way. The path had been improved since our former visit, and may now be ridden up without much difficulty. The day was very warm, and the sun shone upon us with scorching power; but the sublimity of scenery in which Mont Cervin is the principal object reconciles one to everything. Monte Rosa itself is not visible until the traveller reaches the crest of the Riffel. We had some refreshment and secured the best bedroom at the hotel, which is built at an elevation of

more than 7000 feet above the level of the sea. This room is called A 1, and commands from its windows two views, either of which would make the fortune of any hotel situated within a few days of London. Even when reclining in bed the traveller may have, from the window which faces the south, a splendid view of Monte Rosa, whilst from the other, which looks towards the west, the still nobler form of Mont Cervin is visible. When the moon shines forth and spreads her silver light over these splendid mountains, it would be impossible to compose oneself to sleep did not the fatigue of the day's excursion render repose too inviting to be resisted.

One can ride the whole way without much difficulty to the summit of the Görner Grat, but I dismissed "Fritz" a little before reaching it. The stabling on the Riffel is not of the finest kind, but "Fritz" seemed to have no objection to going there and tasting the provender. The Görner Grat is an elevated ridge to the east of the Riffelberg, and immediately opposite Monte Rosa. It commands by far the finest view of the Monte Rosa chain and glaciers. The Italian side of the mountain is much steeper, and, as it faces the south, the snow melts more quickly, nor can it rest so well there. Hence the southern aspect of Monte Rosa displays a wide expanse of scarped, weather-beaten, and precipitous rocks, with snow only on the ridges and in the clefts; but the glaciers there are generally shorter and less extensive. On the side opposite the Görner

Grat, the Monte Rosa chain presents a less abrupt declivity, and an almost unbroken field of snow and glacier. Moreover, this being the northern side of the mountain, the snow is not so rapidly melted by the heat of the sun. The prospect therefore is one in which ice and snow, not rock, form the predominating features.

The earliest attempts to ascend Monte Rosa of which we have any record were made from the Italian side, but the "Höchste Spitze" has never been scaled except from the neighbourhood of Zermatt. On our first visit to Zermatt, in 1850, this highest peak had not been actually attained by any one, although in that year Hermann and Adolph Schlagintweit may claim credit for having reached a point only 18 feet below it, which they then supposed to be the real summit. Several travellers shortly afterwards followed them to the same spot. But it was not until the year 1855 that the true Höchste Spitze was really gained; and the honour of that exploit belongs to Mr. Kennedy, now Vice-President of the Alpine Club, who was accompanied by the two Messrs. Smyth, Mr. Birkbeck, and Mr. Stevenson, all of whom are distinguished mountaineers. Since that period the Höchste Spitze has been ascended by numerous persons, and Mr. Hinchliff in his book* has given an interesting account of one of his visits there.

It was 3.30 P.M. when we gained the summit of the

* 'Summer Months among the Alps,' p. 103.

Görner Grat, and saw a magnificent view spread before us, far superior to that which, on the occasion of our former visit, had been beheld from the foot of the Riffelhorn. Indeed the wonderful extent and sublimity of the panorama cannot be described in words, and no picture could be large enough to include it all. Our friend Mr. F—, who had already been there for some few hours before we arrived, was waiting for us in a state of uncontrollable enthusiasm. There was a picturesque group of travellers and guides, all fully occupied: some were talking; some sketching, some studying the geography of the mountains and planning future expeditions. In a few minutes we were as busy as any of them, and made a most careful study of the magnificent scenery around us. On looking from the Görner Grat first towards Monte Rosa, and then turning round towards the right-hand and surveying the mountains as they appear in succession in the splendid amphitheatre, the following is the order in which they meet the eye. Those which appear in the grandest proportions I have put in capital letters:—

MONTE ROSA.
Lyskamm.
The Jumeaux (Castor and Pôlux).
BREITHORN.
Petit Mont Cervin.
The St. Théodule Pass and Horn.
MONT CERVIN (or Matter-horn).
Tête Blanche.
DENT BLANCHE.

Gabel Horn.
Triften Horn.
ROTH HORN (or Moming).
WEISS HORN.
The Bernese Alps, viz. :—Dolden Horn or Nesthorn.
Bietsch-horn.
Breithorn.
Blumlis Alp.
Mischabel or Täschhorn.
The Dom or Alphubel.
Rympfisch Horn.
Strahlhorn.
Stockhorn.
CIMA DI JAZZI.

The sky was cloudless, and the air still and balmy. Notwithstanding the great elevation at which we stood, about 9000 feet above the sea-level, the temperature was quite warm and pleasant; and we all agreed that, instead of going down to dinner at the hotel at the appointed hour of 6 P.M., we would remain on the top to see the sun set. I rejoiced to find that the gentlemen appreciated the glorious beauty of the scene so much that they preferred to have a cold or overcooked dinner rather than miss the sunset, and they acknowledged that they were fully repaid by the result. At about 5.30 P.M. the tints of sunshine on the mountains began to deepen into a roseate hue, and it was charming to watch the delicate variations of colour which rapidly succeeded one another, until finally Monte Rosa caught with its highest peak the last rays of the departing sun. Exactly at 6 P.M. the moon rose over

Lyskamm, and for a moment or two appeared as if actually resting on its summit. The effect was most peculiar and beautiful, and can never be forgotten.

The air became speedily colder when the sun had set. Our enthusiasm was satisfied, and some of the party began to remind us that there were attractions at the hotel not unworthy in their turn of receiving attention. At 6.40 P.M. we commenced the descent, and reached the Riffel Hotel in 50 minutes, having rattled down at a merry pace. One of the guides, to give notice of our approach, tried the echoes of the mountains with the Swiss cry, and Thomas, from below, answered him; and we had thus quite a chorus of mountain echoes mingled with our gay laughter. A large party were assembled in the inn this evening, and all were full of their past adventures and the coming events of the morrow.

Sept. 10.—We were favoured with another splendid morning, and at an early hour several parties left the Riffel Hotel bent on their various expeditions. We had been travelling for so many days in succession, without pause, that we now determined to enjoy a thoroughly quiet day on the Riffelberg. We had made up our minds to cross into Italy by the Monte Moro, although several persons persisted in assuring us that the season was too far advanced for such an undertaking. The weather to-day would have been very propitious for crossing the St. Théodule Pass, but as we wished to visit the Italian lakes it would have taken us out of our way.

Mr. F—, however, resolved to ascend as far as the summit of the pass, and then return to Zermatt; and he started this morning at an early hour from the Riffel Hotel and accomplished his undertaking without difficulty, reaching Zermatt on his return at about 3 P.M. The pedestrian saves nearly two hours by going to the St. Théodule Pass from the Riffel, instead of starting from Zermatt: in the former case he must descend to the Görner Glacier and cross it, and the whole journey must therefore be accomplished on foot; but if the excursion is made from Zermatt, almost half the journey to the Col can be made on horseback. Mr. F— assured me that I could have ascended the St. Théodule Pass without difficulty or danger, and he expressed his great regret that we had not accompanied him, for he enjoyed from the summit one of the most magnificent views in Switzerland. Some repose was, however, indispensable, and there are few places where a quiet day can be more enjoyed than on the Riffelberg.

We observed from our window this morning a little incident which amused us. An English party had just arrived on horseback, and the horse of one of the ladies had in the course of the journey cast a shoe, in consequence of which the rider had been obliged to dismount and to walk a considerable distance during the last two days. Even at Zermatt no one had been found capable of shoeing the horse, and the unlucky animal had been made to scramble up the mountain on three legs as

he best could, and the lady had walked a great distance. Thomas, however, who was standing outside the hotel when the party arrived, and had observed the state of affairs, immediately offered his services, and, being ready for any emergency, he produced from his stores the necessary tools, and in a few minutes was busily engaged in shoeing the poor horse. This he soon accomplished to the lady's complete satisfaction, and she was thus enabled to continue her journey to the summit of the Görner Grat.

There is, within a few yards of the hotel, a fine view of the Bernese Alps: the Bietsch-horn, the Eiger, the Jungfrau, and the Mönch were distinctly visible. We amused ourselves for some time by watching, through a telescope, a lady and gentleman who were ascending the St. Théodule Pass from Zermatt; the lady was riding, and her companion on foot. They were on the opposite side of the Görner Glacier, at a great distance, and it was extremely interesting to observe their slow and toilsome progress upwards while we were lazily reclining at our ease on the grassy slope. We then strolled to the northern end of the ridge on which the hotel is built. It is about half an hour's walk from the hotel, and commands a magnificent view of Mont Cervin. There we occupied ourselves for some time in sketching that splendid mountain, but a few drifting clouds reached the top and rendered it difficult to get the outline with perfect accuracy. In the afternoon we left the Riffel-

berg hotel, and walked down to Zermatt in about a couple of hours. As we descended we saw something sparkling, which we picked up, and it proved to be a lady's brooch, which had been dropped in the morning. We found the owner at Zermatt, but before we had arrived there the news of the loss of the brooch and that we had found it had already reached the village. As we came down the mountain we made a short cut, but should have done much better to have kept the regular path. On several occasions we found ourselves in considerable difficulty from the extreme steepness of the places we had to descend, and I sometimes doubted whether I could really get down; but with the assistance of the trees and bushes I succeeded. As we went through the wood on this less beaten track we frightened numerous large birds out of the trees; they seemed to be a kind of wild pigeon. At one place where we were descending a steep slope that was almost a precipice, a flock of sheep gave us a good deal of trouble from their most inconvenient tameness. They followed us wherever we went, keeping always rather above us, and frequently rolled down the loose stones in a manner not at all agreeable.

It was with a good deal of regret that we shifted our quarters from the little inn on the Riffel to the hotel at Zermatt; for at the latter place you are in the midst of a miserable village, and nothing of much interest is to be seen except the glorious crest of Mont Cervin;

but every window in the Riffel hotel commands a beautiful and extensive prospect of mountains and glaciers, and in warm weather the pure cool air is inexpressibly delicious and invigorating.

Sept. 11.—This morning was fine and sunshiny, but there were many masses of clouds floating in the atmosphere and occasionally clinging to the summits of the mountains. H— and I wished to pay another visit to

Mont Cervin from the Schwartz See.

the Schwartz See before leaving Zermatt, and accordingly at 7 A.M. we started on that expedition. In two hours and a half we arrived at the little chapel by the Schwartz See, and were just in time to have an unobstructed view of Mont Cervin from the ridge above the

lake. But the clouds continued to increase, and in less than half an hour the stupendous form of this noble mountain was enveloped in mist, and its summit became invisible. Not a cloud, however, interfered with our view of Monte Rosa and the Görner Glacier, on which the sun shone brightly. The Breithorn was particularly beautiful. We remained nearly two hours enjoying the wonderful scene, and then began our return to Zermatt, where we arrived shortly after 1 P.M. As we descended to the Zmutt Glacier we were delighted with the view of a beautiful rainbow, which, below our feet, spanned with its arch the village of Zmutt.

> "Life slips from underneath us, like that arch
> Of airy workmanship whereon we stood,
> Earth stretched below, heaven in our neighbourhood."*

A few drops of rain fell, but the sun still shone warmly and brilliantly upon us.

Mr. Ruskin, in his 'Modern Painters,'† complains that the noble glacier at the foot of Mont Cervin should be called the "Zmutt Glacier," which, he says, may be easily confounded with the "*Zermatt* Glacier," properly so called; and he proposes to call it the RED GLACIER. He gives the following description of it:—

"For two or three miles above its lower extremity, the whole surface of it is covered with blocks of reddish gneiss, or other slaty crystalline rocks—some fallen from the Cervin, some from the Weisshorn, some brought from the Stockhi and Dent d'Erin,

* Wordsworth. † Vol. iv. chap. 16, p. 242.

but little rolled or ground down in the transit, and covering the ice, often four or five feet deep, with a species of macadamization on a large scale (each stone being usually some foot or foot and a-half in diameter), anything but convenient to a traveller in haste. Higher up, the ice opens into broad white fields and furrows, hard and dry, scarcely fissured at all, except just under the Cervin, and forming a silent and solemn causeway, paved, as it seems, with white marble from side to side; broad enough for the march of an army in line of battle, but quiet as a street of tombs in a buried city, and bordered on each hand by ghostly cliffs of that faint granite purple, which seems, in its far-away height, as unsubstantial as the dark blue that bounds it; the whole scene so changeless and soundless; so removed, not merely from the presence of men, but even from their thoughts; so destitute of all life, of tree or herb, and so immeasurable in its lonely brightness of majestic death, that it looks like a world from which not only the human, but the spiritual, presences had perished, and the last of its archangels, building the great mountains for their monuments, had laid themselves down in the sunlight to an eternal rest, each in his white shroud."

After an hour's stay at Zermatt, we left it at 2.15 P.M., and proceeded to St. Nicholas, where we arrived in four hours. "Fritz," who had carried me to the Schwartz See in the morning, did not appear in the least fatigued by the exertions of the day. He was invaluable to me throughout this expedition, for there is a great dearth of horses and mules at Zermatt for the use of travellers, and the whole place, during this year, was not supplied with more than two or three. Young Joseph Lochmatter, the brother of the famous guide who keeps the inn at Macugnaga, was returning from Zermatt, and intending to go home by the way of Monte Moro. We therefore engaged his services to carry part of our bag-

gage, and he proved to be extremely civil and obliging. There are two decent inns at St. Nicholas, and we found tolerable sleeping quarters at the Hôtel de la Croix.

Before taking leave of Zermatt, I cannot help observing how imperfectly the resources of the place have yet been explored for the benefit of ordinary tourists, and how little idea the people there seem to have of discovering fine points of view from which some of the principal mountains of the neighbourhood may be best seen. On our first visit to Zermatt we were not taken to the Görner Grat at all, but only to a point below the Riffelhorn. On the present occasion we were more fortunate, so far as respects the Monte Rosa chain, but we had only a distant view of the Weiss-horn on the west, or of Mischabel-hörner on the east, of the valley of Zermatt. From the valley itself neither of these mountains could I see at all; but there surely must, within a convenient distance from Zermatt, be points easily accessible even to travellers of my own sex, and commanding a fine view of these wonderful mountains. I heard, however, of nothing of the kind, and will therefore express a hope that the next adventurous pedestrian who explores the regions round Zermatt will take the trouble of observing and communicating to the world from what points of easy access these superb mountains may be best seen. No one who has read Professor Forbes's account of his journey from Evolena to Zermatt, and his eloquent description of the prospect

enjoyed from the Stockhorn of the Col d'Erin, can fail to envy him the pleasure which he then experienced; but the dangers and difficulty of such an ascent are more than can be encountered by ordinary travellers, particularly ladies. It is seldom that fine views are to be seen only from almost inaccessible summits, and I feel a strong impression that if the district about Zermatt were sufficiently explored, it would be found that there are places tolerably accessible, from which an approximation might be obtained even to the view described by Professor Forbes. But the people of Zermatt are strangely lethargic and unenterprising; and if what I have suggested is done, I feel no doubt that we shall be indebted for it to English travellers.

Sept. 12.—We left St. Nicholas this morning at 7 A.M., and descended the valley as far as Stalden, where we arrived in about two hours. Here with great regret we parted from our fellow-traveller Mr. F—, who was proceeding to Thun, whilst we were bound on an expedition over the Monte Moro, and were about to visit the Italian lakes. We therefore, on leaving Stalden, again turned towards the south, and proceeded up the valley of Saas. We were much struck with the superiority of the scenery of the valley of Saas over that of Zermatt. It is also more highly cultivated, and the peasantry appear to be better off. We arrived at Saas in about four hours after leaving Stalden. It was market-day, and the village was thronged with people from the

country and droves of cattle. We went to the Hôtel Monte Rosa, and ordered dinner, intending to proceed in the afternoon to the little inn at Mattmarksee. A new hotel was being built at Saas, which is now finished, and has entirely superseded the old one. We inquired after the celebrated curé of Saas, Herr Imseng, whose exploits on this side the Alps have made him as famous as Herr Zumstein on the other, though his celebrity is rather that of a daring mountaineer than of a scientific explorer. Unfortunately Herr Imseng was absent when we arrived, and although the people at the hotel were very civil, we found it impossible to put them into a sufficient state of activity to enable us to get some dinner and continue our journey. The curé himself was the real, though not the ostensible, proprietor of the establishment, and perhaps the key of the wine-cellar was absent as well as himself. We had therefore to submit to a detention of nearly three hours at Saas, and our impatience was getting uncontrollable, when the curé at last made his appearance. Our dinner was then instantly served, with a bottle of excellent wine from the now accessible cellar. Herr Imseng politely paid us a visit, and offered his services to make arrangements for our passing the Moro. He promised also that a supply of provisions should be sent for us to the inn at Mattmarksee, which has not always a very abundantly stored larder. H— requested the curé to take a glass of wine, and ordered

the "kellnerin" to bring a fresh supply of a choice kind selected from the card. Her embarrassment at receiving the order was irresistibly comic, for it was quite evident that without the curé's assistance she did not know where to find the wine. At last she mustered courage to ask him in our presence, and he, with great gravity, gave her the necessary directions and the key; the wine was then produced. Herr Imseng is now above sixty years of age, is short-sighted and wears spectacles, and his clerical costume has not always that unexceptionable freshness and richness which distinguish the robes of the priests in Belgium. His vestments had evidently seen some rough work on the mountains, and were resplendent with the polish of grease and friction. We found him most intelligent and communicative, and he has an air of superiority about him not always to be seen in the curés of mountain villages. He recommended to us for our guide over the Moro a powerful, broad-shouldered man, who was called the landlord of the hotel; but we had promised Thomas, who was well acquainted with the pass, that he should have the honour of conducting us over it, and we therefore contented ourselves with engaging at Saas a porter who was to assist young Lochmatter during the next day in carrying our baggage from Mattmarksee to Macugnaga.

It was not till a little before 5 P.M. that we quitted Saas and proceeded on our journey. When "Fritz"

was brought to the door all the people of the hotel (including the cook, with his paper cap) came out to see me mount. The curé was at my elbow as my husband assisted me into the saddle, but the latter performed his duty so awkwardly that I twice slipped down, and on the second occasion the curé rushed forwards with outspread hands, and assisted me to mount after a method unknown at any riding-school. A broad smile came over every face, and Thomas, who was always quick enough to see anything comic, led away "Fritz" by the bridle in complete silence, but evidently in a state of semi-suffocation. I preserved my own gravity with great dignity and composure, until we had left Saas and were out of sight and hearing.

Shortly after leaving Saas we passed on our right hand the entrance to the beautiful Fée valley. It appeared half-filled by an enormous glacier of the most brilliant colour, and looked most inviting. We much wished to have stayed a day longer to explore its recesses, but the season was now so far advanced, and the weather so uncertain, that we felt ourselves under the necessity of pushing forwards as quickly as we could, in order to cross the Monte Moro into Italy before a change should take place.

At 6.30 P.M. we reached the foot of the great Allelein Glacier, which forms the northern boundary of the Mattmarksee, and stretches from it downwards into the valley of Saas. Here we met two of our countrymen,

who had just crossed the Moro from Macugnaga, and were proceeding to Saas. They were positively boiling over with delight and enthusiasm, and seemed unable to expatiate sufficiently on the wonders and beauty of the scenes they had just passed through. However, as it was rapidly becoming dusk, we were obliged to terminate our conversation with them abruptly, and to continue our slow and toilsome journey, whilst they darted down the valley towards Saas, as swiftly as birds of passage. At 6.55 P.M. we reached the place where it becomes necessary to cross a portion of the glacier. I then dismounted and walked the rest of the way, it not being possible to ride any more with safety. Nothing could be worse than the path along which we went, for it was strewed with large, rough, loose rocks and stones, which gave no certain footing. As it was becoming dark we could see only for a short distance beyond us, and all that we could distinguish in the dim twilight presented a picture of complete desolation. Every trace of vegetation had disappeared, and the principal object that met our eyes was a melancholy grey lake, the Mattmarksee, surrounded by enormous earthy-looking, moraine-covered glaciers, which feed it, and make its waters nearly as cold as themselves. Occasionally our guide, who was walking behind us, would cast a huge stone into the water with a loud splash, which made us look anxiously back to see what the noise was. The insecurity of the road appeared greater

than it really was, for every difficulty and danger was magnified in the darkness by the power of the imagination. It was 7.30 P.M. before we reached the little inn beside the lake, which is nearly 7000 feet above the level of the sea. Once or twice we thought we must have lost the path, but at last we saw a light, and heard the welcome sound of voices calling to us. The people at the inn hearing Thomas hail them with the Swiss cry, had sent out a man with a lantern to guide us, and this served to show that the cattle-trodden path along which we went was as dirty and disagreeable as it was narrow. All we could do was to splash on through the mud as fast as possible; for there was no avoiding the deep holes full of water.

I rather fancy that before we reached our destination, I became cross at finding myself benighted, in consequence of our long detention at Saas. Of one thing I am sure—I was very glad to find myself at last in safety under the humble roof of the little inn. This had only been opened a few months before, and was not quite finished. The carpenters' chips were plentifully strewed over the threshold of the entrance. Our bedroom was very small and uninviting, but a colony of active little tormentors had already established themselves there. We were, however, thankful for the shelter which the place afforded us. The good old woman who attended upon us, and had the care of the establishment, was the sister of the curé of Saas. She

said that she considered the season had now come to an end, and that she and the domestics were about to quit the place for the winter. The larder was not provided with abundant supplies, but the curé had sent on a few things by the porter. Poor as the place is, we contrived, after a scanty repast, to sleep there soundly.

Since the inn at Mattmarksee has been completed, better provision is now perhaps made for the accommodation of guests, and I have heard one of my friends, who has been there lately, speak in glowing terms of some excellent mulled wine which he enjoyed at the place. At all events, no lady ought to complain of the inn, merely on account of the roughness of its deal furniture, or the primitive character of its cookery; for without this sleeping-place, it would be scarcely possible for her, unless she incurred dreadful fatigue, to cross the Moro at all. The great object is to be able to cross at such an early hour that the heat of the sun shall not have yet softened the snow, so that it remains still solid and hard enough to support one without the risk of the foot sinking too deep into it. But if you sleep at Saas it will occupy more than five hours to reach the summit, and the snow will already have become softened before you reach it, unless you start about midnight. By sleeping at Mattmarksee, you are able to reach the summit in little more than two hours after leaving the hotel, and can therefore cross the snow while it is yet firm and dry.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PASS OF THE MONTE MORO.

An early start — A raw morning — The Rosswang Glacier — The parting with "Fritz" — "Fritz" and the silver knife — A Chamois on the glacier — A staircase up the mountain — The little cow a good climber — The summit of the Pass — Snow, mist, and disappointment — A glissade — The unveiling of Monte Rosa — Glorious view — The descent to Macugnaga — Lochmatter's Inn — Change of weather, and a storm.

Sept. 13.—We rose this morning long before daybreak, and dressed as quickly as we could by the glimmer of a miserable tallow candle. It was extremely cold, and a mist which overspread the lake added to the darkness. Certainly there is not, so far as we could judge, much temptation for any one to linger long in this dreary abode. The good woman of the house soon supplied us with some hot coffee, which tasted of beans, and some eggs and bread and butter, which had a flavour of garlic. These were quickly despatched, and at 5.30 A.M. we left the hotel. I was able to ride "Fritz" to the foot of the Rosswang Glacier, though some portions of the path were steep and difficult. The sturdy porter provided by the curé carried our carpet-bag, and a stock of provisions for lunch, in a basket on

his back. Young Lochmatter carried the remainder of our effects, and Thomas was inaugurated as guide. A woman, who was to take "Fritz" back to the inn when I could no longer ride him, also accompanied us. We were a strange-looking, motley party as we emerged from the shelter of the inn, and began our ascent. The morning was raw, and every object looked grey and foggy over Mattmarksee. The mountains above it, on our right hand, were completely hidden by mist. We left this uninteresting spot with a kind of shudder, and pushed onwards in the hope of speedily finding brighter skies and a warmer climate when we should have crossed to the other side. We passed the Distel Alp, and at 6.45 A.M. reached the foot of the Rosswang Glacier, beyond which no horse can be ridden. Here I dismounted, and took leave of "Fritz," who had carried me for so many days to my perfect satisfaction. He was not without defects, for he was blind of one eye; but he was a very clever animal, and climbed up the steepest places with the greatest agility. I always had perfect confidence in his sure-footedness, and rode him with a slack rein, giving him his head, and trusting entirely to his dexterity. Thus I went with him over many rugged and difficult places, which were occasionally so bad that I heard Thomas positively groan (on "Fritz's" account, not mine) when he saw his pet horse struggling amidst the dangerous rocks. Whenever "Fritz" accomplished some difficult feat of this kind, and stood still to

88578

regain his breath, Thomas would come and throw his arms round his neck and kiss him with a tenderness which the horse seemed fully to appreciate. My plan has always been to ride up the mountains, and to walk down them; for there is little danger in ascending a steep place on horseback, but very great in coming down. Most of the mountain horses in Switzerland are used, when the season is over, as baggage horses, and are accustomed to carry heavy weights along the brink of precipices, and up the roughest and most rapid acclivities. They then follow one another in line, and are guided almost entirely by the voice of the driver. The best way, therefore, of riding in safety, in a mountain expedition, is to let your horse have pretty well his own way, and to fancy yourself for the occasion a sack of flour or load of wood. If this be done, very few accidents will be met with. "Fritz" and I became excellent friends from the very commencement of our acquaintance, and he speedily found out that I always carried a piece of bread for him in my pocket, and when he thought he had waited long enough for it, he would remind me that I was neglecting him by giving me a tap with his nose. On one occasion, when, on our journey to Zermatt, we did not arrive until after dark, I thought the poor animal must be as tired and hungry with the long journey as ourselves, and I emptied every scrap of bread for him out of my pocket, but without being able in the dim twilight to see what I was giving

him. Suddenly I missed a small silver fruit-knife, in a morocco case, which I generally carried in the same pocket. "Fritz" had his mouth full, and was munching away with great resolution, when I exclaimed to Thomas, "I have killed 'Fritz'—I have given him my silver knife with the bread!" Thomas immediately seized the horse, pinched his throat to prevent his swallowing what he had in his mouth, and tried to force open his jaws. "Fritz," however, was not at all disposed to part with what he had got until he had thoroughly experimented upon it, and a struggle of a few seconds took place between him and his master, which finished by the knife dropping out of the horse's mouth on the ground. But this did not occur till "Fritz's" teeth had been well tried on the knife, and had bitten through the morocco case and broken the mother-of-pearl handle.

Although Thomas intended to return from Macugnaga on the following day, he could not part with "Fritz" without some emotion, and tears came into his eyes as he hugged him round the neck. He then, with more practical good sense, looked his shoes over, and began to put them in order by hammering tight every loosened nail. Whilst he was thus employed, I gazed at the wide expanse of the snow-covered glacier, along the edge of which, up the steep rocks forming its western boundary, lay our path. Suddenly I descried in the far distance, on the opposite side of the glacier,

a small object which was slowly descending towards us. I thought at first it was a man, and inquired if there was a pass on that side of the glacier, as I thought I saw some person crossing it. There was not at that point, and everybody looked to see what it could be that had attracted my attention. The keen eyes of Thomas at once perceived that it was a chamois, and our interest now became every moment intenser, whilst we watched the animal continuing its descent until it suddenly caught sight of us and stopped. Our guides then shouted with all their might until the mountains re-echoed. I have always understood that the chamois is particularly cautious in crossing a glacier, and will never do so except in the most deliberate manner; but on the present occasion the poor frightened creature galloped across the whole width of the Rosswang Glacier with the greatest rapidity, and completely crossed it in a very few minutes, coming over to the side at which we were, but at a great height above us. About three quarters of an hour afterwards, when we had climbed a considerable distance up the pass, and had reached the snow, we came to the place where the chamois had crossed, and saw the fresh marks of his footsteps in the smooth snow. This little incident gave us great pleasure, for it always reminds the traveller that he is indeed among the high Alps when he meets with the shy and surefooted chamois. We also observed in the snow the footprints of a fox and some ptarmigan.

The ascent begins in right earnest from the point where I started on foot. The path is composed, for the greater part of the way, of huge slabs of stone which have almost the appearance of a staircase. They are partly of natural rock, but have, by art, been made a little more convenient for the use of travellers. The pass of the Moro was once much frequented, and a good deal of labour must have been expended in making it practicable for horses, which it once was. But it has now fallen into decay and ruin. These slabs of stone, though they afforded a firm footing, were rather difficult to walk on, from their extreme slipperiness. The moisture produced by the influence of the midday sun upon the snow, is converted into an icy covering by the sharp frosts of night, and every mass of stone is fringed with pendent icicles. These icy slabs therefore afford very insecure walking, but I always found a hand extended and a strong arm ready to assist me when I came to any place of unusual difficulty. In general, however, I preferred to depend on my trusty alpenstock. Although horses cannot cross the Moro, this pass can nevertheless be traversed by the small mountain cattle of Switzerland, and we overtook a peasant who was driving a little cow before him. He preceded us to the other side of the pass, and succeeded in taking his cow over places which I should have thought utterly impracticable; but the cows in Switzerland are almost as agile as goats. The poor creature was indeed sorely tried

on several occasions, but she crossed safely over to the Italian side.

We did not meet with so much snow on the pass as we had expected. We had heard so much about immense tracts of deep snow, and the great difficulties a lady must encounter in crossing, that I had made up my mind that the journey would be found a much more serious undertaking than it proved. I had in fact been told, by more than one person, in answer to my inquiries, that it was *impossible* for a lady to cross the Moro. This, however, was before the inn at Mattmarksee was built: and several of my countrywomen have since refuted this absurd notion. The snow was in a remarkably favourable state when we crossed it; and although it formed a very steep slope, it was not difficult to walk upon, as the sun had not yet softened it. As we ascended the pass, we looked occasionally towards the lofty mountains on our right hand, which form the immense barrier between the place where we stood and Zermatt; but they were not yet wholly free from mist, and we only enjoyed occasional glimpses of their magnificent outlines. The Mattmarksee and the valley of Saas were entirely obscured from our view. As there was but little wind, the air was particularly calm, though intensely cold. Very good footing was found except in a few places, and my only difficulty was to climb for about an hour up an exceedingly steep ascent, with several persons all wishing to assist me at the same time.

At 7.50 A.M. we reached the wooden cross which marks the summit of the pass; this is 9640 feet above the level of the sea. Great, however, was our disappointment when we found ourselves enveloped, on first arriving there, in a cloud of driving mist, which prevented us from seeing more than a few yards in advance, and rendered Monte Rosa quite invisible. This then was to be the disappointing result of all our long cherished hopes and expectations! Notwithstanding the severity of the cold, I proposed that we should find some sheltered spot where we might sit down to wait until the mist should clear away, but our guides assured me that we should be speedily frozen to death if we attempted anything of the kind. It was absolutely necessary to get out of the current of cold foggy air that whirled over the top of the pass, and we therefore descended a short distance down the mountain on the Italian side. As we worked our way along the steeply inclined slope of snow, Thomas held me firmly by the arm, and it occurred to me that I might try the experiment of a glissade in the style that I had heard described by mountaineers. I therefore put my feet together, and used all my force to descend like a skater down the smooth snow. But my experiment was unsuccessful; and as I had given Thomas no previous notice of my intention, he checked my progress with all his strength, and was nearly rolled over in the snow. I was not allowed to repeat the experiment.

As soon as we had crossed the snow-field, and had escaped from the current of cold air at the top, which we did in a very few minutes, we sat down under the shelter of a rock, and began to console ourselves, as well as we could, for the mortification of having arrived at this lofty elevation without being able to see the view which it commands. Whilst we were thus engaged, and had lost all hopes of better fortune, we observed the cloud of mist which enveloped us suddenly open, a light breeze seemed to drive it away and melt it in the air, and in a very few minutes the magnificent form of Monte Rosa was displayed to our admiring eyes, without a cloud, and gleaming in the brightest sunshine. Nothing could be more beautiful than to see this gradual unveiling of the Queen of the Southern Alps. All the peaks which form her crown became visible, and beneath them was an immense wall of perpendicular rock, so steep that the snow could only rest on a few projecting ledges, and in the hollows of the deep fissures with which its surface is seamed. The view of Monte Rosa from the Moro is of a totally different kind to the view from the Görner Grat. When seen from the latter place Monte Rosa is only one of an extensive chain of mighty mountains, and the expanse of snow, rock, and glacier, is almost without limit; but when viewed from the Moro, Monte Rosa is beheld standing almost by itself, and its own huge bulk hides the elongated chain of which it forms a part. There is, therefore, no other snowy summit of sufficient

importance to challenge comparison with it. The Alps are generally more precipitous on the Italian than on the Swiss side; and this difference becomes strikingly obvious when Monte Rosa is viewed from the Moro. The scene was one of stern and majestic grandeur: above us towered, at an immense height, the nucleus of rocky peaks which form the crest of the mountain, and have each their distinctive names—the Nord End, the Höchste Spitze, the Zumstein Spitze, and the Signal Kuppe. Below our feet, at an immense and almost inconceivable depth, were the glaciers, valley, and little village of Macugnaga, to which we were bound. We looked at our place of destination with some degree of wonderment, speculating as to how it was possible to get down there; but we took for granted that as others had gone before, we should be able to follow. All doubts were removed by seeing a peasant and his little cow descending with the greatest composure, and as it was still very cold, we were glad, after a few minutes' pause, to follow them. But on descending a short distance, we found ourselves once more on soft green turf, which here grows luxuriantly among the heaps of rocks piled one upon another, and down which we had to pursue our devious way. We were soon in a warmer atmosphere, and seated ourselves beneath the shelter of a huge rock in the bright sunshine. Here we enjoyed an excellent repast, which made some compensation for our scanty breakfast; and our

eyes were fixed with insatiable delight on the unclouded form of Monte Rosa. The morning had now become warm and genial, and the air was particularly light and soft. As we had the whole day before us, we determined not to hurry in descending, but to enjoy, thoroughly and at leisure, the glorious prospect. We therefore lingered on the way, making frequent halts, and sitting down at every enticing nook to enjoy the sublime scenery. The walking was not always very easy, for we frequently had to scramble across sloping faces of smooth, slippery rock, projecting from the turf, and these required a good deal of care to get over. In this manner we occupied about four hours in descending from the summit of the Col to Macugnaga.

By reason of the excessive steepness of the Italian side, it would be an almost impracticable undertaking for any lady to cross the Moro from Macugnaga to Saas, and I would strongly recommend no one to attempt it who is not an unusually experienced and vigorous pedestrian. It would be impossible to ride up much of the way without considerable danger of both horse and rider falling backwards into the abyss. It is not, in fine weather, very difficult to cross from the Swiss side, as we did; but if the route were reversed, the fatigue would be excessive, and no lady should attempt it unless she is prepared to travel in a *chaise-à-porteur*.

It was precisely noon when we arrived at the village of Macugnaga, and as we intended to stay there at least

one day, we looked with very anxious eyes to discover the inn that was to be our resting place. We saw nothing in the village itself except wooden houses of very unprepossessing appearance; but a little beyond the village, at the upper part of the grassy hollow in which it is situated, there were several neat looking whitewashed buildings, one of which we hoped would prove to be the hotel. Young Lochmatter however assured us, very truly, that they were all private residences, and that there was then no inn better than his brother's, to which he proposed to conduct us. We accordingly went there with him, but when we saw what a poor-looking place it really was, we felt some consternation. Lochmatter himself was not at home; he was acting as guide to some Englishmen across the Weissthor.

We were led into the *salle-à-manger*, which was an old-fashioned, low-roofed room of tolerable size, furnished with plain deal tables, and benches instead of chairs. It contained a large stove which made it thoroughly warm, and the room, though humble, was not uncomfortable. Lochmatter's wife and sister attended to the guests, and were extremely civil, making the best of the scanty means at their disposal. They were nice-looking persons, superior to most of the same class whom one generally meets with in Italian inns. They belong to the German population of Macugnaga. The other inn is kept by Dominica, who is an Italian; he has since

enlarged and almost rebuilt his house, but at this time his place was no better than Lochmatter's. There were two gentlemen staying at the house, one a German, the other an Italian. They had already secured the best bed rooms, and we were shown to a large double-bedded room on the other side of the yard, away from the house. It was clean and commodious; but when the weather changed, it proved inconvenient, for there was no attendant in this out-building, and we had therefore either to wait upon ourselves, or cross the yard to the inn to make known our wants. Although by no means excessively fatigued, I was glad to recline a little to rest myself. The valley felt exceedingly hot, after we had so recently left the cool, invigorating mountain air. At 3 P.M. a small fine rain began to fall, which gradually increased until it poured down heavily, and the wind blew with great violence. In fact we had, before night, a regular storm, and we congratulated ourselves that we were safely housed, though in rough quarters. In the evening we went to the *salle-à-manger* of the inn. After dinner we tried the coffee, but it had that peculiar roast-bean flavour which is so frequently met with in village inns. Fortunately we had some excellent tea with us, and we ordered some hot water to be brought; but a long time having elapsed without its appearing, and, as there was no bell, I went into the kitchen which adjoined, and found that the water was being boiled in the frying pan, whilst a little boy held a

tallow candle over it in his fingers to see how it was getting on!

The storm continued to rage all night, and as we passed across the yard from the inn to our sleeping quarters, a man preceding us with a lantern, the rain pattered heavily on our umbrellas, and our feet were wetted in the streaming puddles.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIRST VISIT TO THE VAL ANZASCA, THE LAGO D'ORTA, AND VARALLO.

A rainy day at Macugnaga — Glorious sunrise on Monte Rosa — A walk down the Val Anzasca — A polite Italian — Ponte Grande — Vogogna — The Lago d'Orta — Moonlight on San Giulio — A trip over the Col de Colma to Varallo — An interesting valet-de-place — Description of the Sacro Monte — Return to Orta.

Sept. 14.—The rain poured down in such torrents during the whole day that we were unable to quit the inn for an instant. We could not even venture so far as one of the churches, though there were two within sight. Two English gentlemen arrived this morning, and had to sleep in the *salle-à-manger*. It was dreadfully dull to be confined all day in this poor inn, instead of visiting the Belvedere as we had intended. Every one who has been similarly situated knows how depressing such a day must be, in spite of every effort to the contrary. However, with the agreeable conversation of our newly-arrived countrymen, we contrived to pass the time without suffering our patience to become utterly exhausted. It was still raining fast in the valley, and snowing heavily on the mountains, when we went to bed.

Sept. 15.—On awaking at 5 A.M. a wonderful change

was found to have taken place in the weather. The rain had ceased, the clouds had dispersed, and blue sky was visible. There is within five minutes' walk from the inn a tall, wide-spreading, and magnificent limetree, with remarkably small leaves. It grows close by the old church, which is said to have been built about 800 years ago; and the limetree is supposed to have been introduced by some of the early German settlers, whose descendants still live in this upper part of the valley, and speak the German language. From the point where this limetree stands there is a superb view of Monte Rosa. The mountain is seen rising like a gigantic wall of rock, shut in, on the right hand and on the left, by steep precipices, between which, at an enormous depth, lies the valley of Macugnaga. This arrangement of the mountains is most peculiar, and the scene has been likened by De Saussure to a racket-court; but it is one on so mighty a scale that the Titans themselves would have found it too big for a game. At 5.30 A.M. the magnificent crest of Monte Rosa was without a single cloud, and the sun was just reaching it. The effect of the earliest rays of the sun, when they first touched, with their soft, pale, and tender light, the high precipitous rocks—too steep for the snow to rest on—was most exquisite. It was impossible to gaze without deep emotion on a scene of such solemn majesty, viewed under the aspect of such transient and evanescent loveliness; nor could the beholder fail to experience a sentiment of rapturous admiration at the

glory thus displayed in the terrestrial works of the Creator. In a few brief moments the spell was broken, the roseate tint had disappeared, and broad garish daylight was spread over the landscape.

We ought to have stayed another day at Macugnaga, in order to visit the glacier; but we had for thirty hours been imprisoned by bad weather in uncomfortable quarters, from which we eagerly desired to escape. We should have lost much by our impatience if a subsequent visit to this beautiful valley had not enabled us to explore the glaciers and enjoy the splendid view from the Belvedere, on which we now too hastily turned our backs.

At Macugnaga there was not such a thing as a mule, or even donkey, to be had for love or money. If mules are required, they must be fetched from Ponte Grande. We felt that a walk of four hours down the celebrated Val Anzasca could not be so formidable as to overtask even a lady's strength, and therefore at 7.50 A.M. we left Macugnaga on foot, with a porter to carry our baggage. There was a high wind still raging on the mountains, which blew the snow in fine powder off their summits, and made it look like a cloud resting there. We were well sheltered from the wind in the valley, but the dry powdery snow was frequently blown across the road from the heights above, and sprinkled us like rain as we walked along. Directly we had descended the valley a little below Pestarena we were powerfully struck with that marked change in the vegetation which

always enchants the traveller who quits the rugged sternness of Switzerland for the milder climate of Italy. We had just left the valley of Saas, which is richly clothed with firs; but although Macugnaga is on the southern face of the mountains, we found no difference in the character of the vegetation, with the exception of the limetree by the old church. In the Val Anzasca, however, a remarkable change soon manifested itself. At 10 A.M. we had already left the region of firs, and walked beneath magnificent Spanish chestnuts. On the well-cultivated spots near the villages tall hemp was flourishing in rank luxuriance, and the walnut-trees vied in beauty with the chestnuts. At 11 A.M. we were already among trellised vines, on which hung large rich bunches of grapes. At 11.45 A.M. we reached Vanzone, to which a carriage-road from Domo d'Ossola is now constructed, and at 12.30 P.M. we arrived at Ponte Grande. We felt that it was almost impossible to enjoy this enchanting valley sufficiently. It was poetry turned into matter of fact, and we thought of the Happy Valley described in Rasselas. We lingered and turned again and again to look at Monte Rosa, whose snowy summit towered high above everything. At every bend in the valley there was a fresh combination of beautiful scenery. At our feet were loose rocks, scattered by nature's hand, and covered with ferns and flowers in the richest profusion. How poor and feeble, even when on such a scale as that displayed at Chatsworth, are the attempts

to imitate, by artificial combinations of rock, scenes such as those we now viewed!" On each side of the valley the mountains rose precipitously; now and then a waterfall leaped over rocks fringed above with the light branches of the fir, and hidden at the base with the thick foliage of the chestnut and walnut,—Monte Rosa everywhere giving the crowning finish to the scene. Our only regret was that we had to turn our backs upon this mountain as we descended the valley, but we took frequent opportunities of stopping to rest and look round. My feet, it must be acknowledged, had been bruised with the rough walk over the Moro, so that we were a long time in accomplishing the distance. We took one good rest in front of a little church near Vanzone, where, at a place called "Uf'm gruppe," there is another magnificent limetree which grows on a lofty terrace overlooking the Anza. Beneath its outspread branches a seat is placed invitingly round its trunk, and another against the wall of the terrace.

Whilst sitting there in the shade, a young Italian gentleman, who appeared to be a resident in the neighbourhood, approached and addressed us in his own language, evidently desirous of having a chat, and of showing us some civility; but as unfortunately we were not very conversant with Italian, and he spoke no French, our communications were necessarily brief. He produced a most elegant cigar-case, and requested H— to accept a cigar; but as he, happily, does not smoke, this civility

was declined, at which the poor Italian looked greatly disappointed. Finding that all his attempts to make himself agreeable were unavailing, by reason of the difficulty of interchanging ideas, he at last bowed politely and left us to pursue our journey. From the profusion of gold chains and ornaments which adorned his waistcoat, we inferred that he might be a proprietor, he was certainly a patron, of the gold-mines of Pestarena.

Ponte Grande is a thriving place, by reason of the increasing traffic which it enjoys. Its situation is most lovely. As you look up the Val Anzasca, the summit of Monte Rosa may still be seen in the distance, forming a wondrous background. Opposite Ponte Grande, on the other side of the bridge, is the entrance to the beautiful Val Ollocia, which leads to Banio. This we explored on our next visit. The hotel at Ponte Grande was formerly a miserable, dirty old house, and few inns will be found more uniformly or bitterly abused in the travellers' books. The present landlord, however, has erected a handsome edifice, adjoining the old one and communicating with it. This new building seemed quite a luxurious place after the rough accommodation we had experienced at Macugnaga. We were supplied with an excellent dinner, and the charges were not unreasonable; but when we inquired of the waiter about a carriage to take us to Vogogna, an attempt was made at imposition. An Italian gentleman whom we had met at Macugnaga having observed what was

going on, quietly interfered on our behalf, and we succeeded in getting a carriage with one horse to take us to Vogogna for the reasonable sum of eight francs. At 2.30 P.M. we left Ponte Grande, and drove down the steep but smooth and beautiful road to Vogogna, on the Simplon road, where we arrived at 4.15 P.M. We found a comfortable inn there. The landlord supplied us with a dessert of peaches and ripe pears, the first we had met with during the present journey. In the evening we walked up the hill immediately opposite the hotel. This commands a beautiful view of the surrounding country. The lower portion of the hill was covered with vineyards; and it was melancholy to observe everywhere the ravages which had been made by the grape disease, notwithstanding the profuse sprinkling of sulphur, which hung like dust on every bunch.

Sept. 15.—We left Vogogna this morning, having hired a char to take us to Orta. Shortly before reaching Omegna, which is at the head of the Lago d'Orta, the driver suggested that it would be much more agreeable for us to go from Omegna to Orta in a boat, instead of driving along the dusty road, which runs beside the margin of the lake; and he offered to forward us on by a boat instead of the char, if we preferred it. We agreed to his proposal, but we found out afterwards that it would have been much more economical if we had merely hired the carriage to take us to Omegna, and had then engaged there a boat for ourselves. The drive

to Omegna was very beautiful, along an excellent road. A gold-mine had, within the last few months, been discovered in the neighbourhood; and the inhabitants were still suffering from the exciting effects of the gold fever. Gold, however, is generally found in this district in small quantities only; and it cannot be obtained without an expenditure of much money and labour. We passed, on our left hand, the quarries which supplied the marble used in building the cathedral of Milan. These quarries were worked until a few months ago, and were considered inexhaustible; but suddenly, from the want of proper supports, they fell in with a dreadful crash, and it will be impossible to resume working them for a long time.

When we arrived near Omegna, some boatmen, on the lookout for customers, ran after the carriage, caught hold of it, and followed us to the town. Our driver seemed perfectly known to them, and there can be no doubt that the plan of making travellers hire and pay for a carriage all the way to Orta, and then of inducing them to stop at Omegna and consent to be forwarded on by boat, for a mere trifle to be paid to the boatmen, is the habitual system of doing business in this part of the country. Our driver speedily made terms with the boatmen, and returned at once with the carriage to Vogogna. The day was beautiful, but intensely hot. We had a delightful excursion on the lake to Orta. We found when we arrived there that the Duchess of Genoa

and her suite were staying at the Albergo San Giulio, which is by far the best hotel, and that not a room was disengaged there. We accordingly went to the Leone d'Oro, which is prettily situated on the very edge of the lake. The stout landlady was civil, but we found her tricky and imposing; and there was not a single person in the house who could speak any language but Italian. In the evening we took a walk up the Monte Sacro, which commands a splendid view of the lake. On this eminence there are numerous small chapels, containing figures as large as life, in terra cotta, and dressed in real clothing. These figures are intended to represent events in the life of St. Francis of Assisi, and the miracles which monkish legends attribute to him. Our curiosity on that subject was soon satisfied. We then sat down near the summit to enjoy the prospect, and were occasionally watching some men who, with their coats thrown off, were playing at bowls in the midst of the sacred enclosure, when suddenly an alarm was given that some persons of consequence were coming. The game of bowls was immediately abandoned and the coats resumed. Presently the Duchess of Genoa, with some ladies and gentlemen of her suite, made her appearance. She had the good taste to examine the beauties of the lake with much greater interest than the dingy representations of the miracles of St. Francis. There are indeed few scenes of more exquisite loveliness. When the sun had set we returned

to our hotel, and spent the greater part of the evening in the balcony which overlooks the lake. At about 10 P.M. the moon made her appearance over the Monte Sacro, and cast her beautiful light upon the Isola di San Giulio, which is exactly opposite. The old church and picturesque buildings on the island had a magical effect when viewed in the glimmering moonlight. Their appearance then was quite different to that which they present in the glare of day, when all the ravages of time and neglect are plainly visible; but in the moonlight the defects of age are softened or concealed, and as this singular group of buildings which covers the island now shone out with an unearthly splendour above the deep and glittering waters of the lake, they looked more like fairy palaces than actual human habitations. The lake of Orta is a perfect gem; for whether it is seen at morn or by moonlight, or in the changeful hours of day when the lights and shadows vary unceasingly, there is always a fascination about it which every one must feel and acknowledge. It is the smallest of the Italian lakes, and traverse it where you will, both shores are always clearly visible, yet it never looks like a river; and this, according to Wordsworth,* is essential to the perfection of lake scenery. The shores are just far enough apart to enable one to see all the beauties without the defects, and they may be truly said to contribute to mutual

* 'A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England,' by William Wordsworth. Longman and Co., 1823.

illustration and ornament. At the northern end of the lake the mountains are of considerable height, but they gradually become lower towards the south. None of them, however, are of more than moderate elevation; and the charm which the lake affords is not that of sublimity, but of exquisite and most refined beauty. Nothing can be more enjoyable, after a fatiguing journey among the Alps, than to descend to this lake, and glide along its glassy surface in the luxury of indolent repose.

Sept. 16.—We started this morning on an excursion to Varallo, and its famous Sacro Monte. At 6.30 A.M. we crossed in a boat to Pella on the other side of the lake. A miller there supplied me with a donkey for the journey; for mules or horses were not to be had. The old landlady of the Leone d'Oro had, on the previous evening, displayed a very lively desire to supply any donkeys that might be required; but we ascertained that she possessed none herself, and merely wished to sell us as customers to the donkey owners at Pella. We therefore declined the honour of her interference, and made our own bargain at Pella without any difficulty. When donkeys are required to go from Orta over the Monterone to Lago Maggiore, they are brought across the lake from Pella in boats, and their grave appearance when they arrive and are landed from the boats is most comical. At Orta, the arrival and departure of boat-loads of passengers and donkeys constitute great part of the amusement of those visitors

who are willing to pass the day quietly, and permit themselves to be amused with the little incidents of the hour.

I was obliged either to ride a donkey or to walk for several miles under the hot sun of an Italian sky, and accordingly I chose the former. My saddle was of the most unique kind, and occasioned us much amusement. It was a kind of pack-saddle, and big enough for a horse; it had no pommel, but a sort of horn in front. It projected far beyond each side of the donkey, and had a single strap passed over it and round the animal to keep it steady. Over the saddle a sheep-skin was thrown, which, as I afterwards discovered, was inhabited by a perfect colony of lively little creatures; but they proved to be so thoroughly comfortable when buried amongst the soft wool, that they never disturbed me, except by occasionally displaying themselves. The saddle, however, had this recommendation, that it did not hurt the donkey, and as the road is a very easy one I managed to keep my balance pretty well. I could not possibly have walked, on account of the heat, which became overpowering long before we reached Varallo. A woman and boy accompanied us, and urged the poor animal forward with repeated blows, and would have acted with still greater cruelty, if I had not, to their great astonishment, peremptorily ordered them to desist. They appeared quite unconscious that a donkey is sufficiently sensitive to suffer from being beaten and

goaded, and they subsided into a state of sullen despondency and wonder when their too active exertions in that respect received a decided check.

The journey between Pella and Varallo over the Col de Colma is one of the most favourite excursions in this district, and well deserves its reputation. After leaving Pella the road almost immediately crosses the stream, on the left bank of which, for two or three miles, the path ascends. This stream is made useful by turning several flour mills. My donkey exhibited symptoms of a desire to terminate his journey at one of them, which he was evidently in the habit of visiting, but a hurricane of blows and shouts urged him forwards. We then ascended a most lovely valley, which was well wooded during the whole distance, and here and there the scene was diversified with a few cottages. For the first time I found some of the delicate and sweetly-scented cyclamen growing wild. My donkey-woman quickly gathered some for me, when she found that I admired them. In about three hours after leaving Pella we reached the Albergo d'Italia at Varallo. Here we took some refreshment, and then, with a valet de place, proceeded to visit the SACRO MONTE.

A valet de place is generally the aversion of experienced travellers, and there are few who are fitted to inspire any other sentiment. Ignorant, unscrupulous, and inaccurate in their statements, greedy of

money, and impatient, when once engaged, to get rid of their employers as soon as they can, in order to seek new victims,—such are too often the characteristics of the class. But the person selected to conduct us to the Sacro Monte could, at a glance, be discerned as one of a different description, and he looked unmistakeably like a gentleman in reduced circumstances, who had known many troubles. He was no longer young, the world had evidently dealt hardly with him, and the interest manifested in his favour by the kind people of the hotel was not, I believe, undeserved. Nothing could exceed the politeness or deference of his manner, or the desire which he displayed to discharge his duties to our complete satisfaction. At the same time he seemed to experience some inward uneasiness from the fact that we were Protestants. His explanations of the scenes represented in the different chapels were sometimes almost amusing from their extreme minuteness; for he appeared to assume that we must be ignorant even of the best known facts of Scripture history.

The Sacro Monte is a celebrated resort of pilgrims in North Italy, and is situated on a steep hill immediately outside the town of Varallo. There are fifty small chapels built upon it, within an inclosure at the top. As the place is in great repute, it is provided with a flourishing café, at which refreshments can be procured. To our eyes, however, this appeared rather incongruous. A steep path, paved with small round

stones, leads up to the sacred inclosure. These stones are so cruelly hard that if they had been peas they would have been boiled long ago. Before ascending, we looked in at the Church of St. Francisco, which contains some of the most noted productions in fresco of Gaudenzio Ferrari. They are painted on a screen in small compartments, and some of them are at so great a height, and so elaborate and minute in their details, besides being greatly faded from the lapse of more than three centuries, that it would be impossible for me to profess to have been greatly delighted with them, without being guilty of insincerity. They are, however, highly interesting as illustrating the progress of Art. We were much more forcibly struck, though I cannot say more charmed, with the figures contained in the little chapels of the Sacro Monte, some of which are also executed after the designs of Gaudenzio. Each chapel contains a group of figures representing one of the events narrated in the Scriptures, and all of them, with the exception of the first in which Adam and Eve appear, refer to events in the history of Christ. The figures, which are as large as life, are executed in terra cotta, with real clothing on them, and their wigs and beards are of real hair. The object of the artists seems to have been to portray to the eyes of pilgrims, in a material form, and in a manner calculated to strike powerfully on the minds of the vulgar, the closest and most actual representations possible of those events described in the New

Testament which best illustrate the life of Our Saviour, and thus to afford

"Lessons for every heart, a Bible for all eyes."

Of course this attempt to give, in a bodily shape, representations of persons and scenes which the mind cannot even idealize without shrinking from its own conceptions, occasions a kind of shudder, and few Protestants can therefore visit the Sacro Monte without experiencing some feeling of repulsion. As however the pilgrims, for whose benefit these representations of historical events are intended, are in general ignorant persons, who are not permitted to acquire a knowledge of the events by a free perusal of the Scripture narrative, it may be doubtful whether the information which they obtain at the Sacro Monte, and the forcible impressions which these coarse but vigorous groups must leave on the memory, may not do good rather than harm, if they do either. Certainly they are less objectionable than what is to be found at other places of the same kind in different parts of Italy, where the incidents sought to be represented are not true events, but monkish legends. Thus at the Sacro Monte of Orta, which is an imitation of that at Varallo, one sees portrayed a series of fabulous miracles attributed to St. Francis, and the effect is most painful to those who are not credulous enough to believe that such things happened. The conclusion to which we came was, that the chapels at Varallo are

for pilgrims and the vulgar, what picture books are for children.

There are from the summit of the Sacro Monte, and from various points around it, most beautiful views of the hills and valleys which surround Varallo, and with which we were at a future period to become more intimately acquainted; but on the present occasion we paid only a flying visit to Varallo, and having finished our pilgrimage, we left that place and returned to Orta, where we arrived in about five hours, enjoying on the way back a delicious row across the lake in the cool of the evening. Shortly after leaving Varallo and ascending the heights which lead to the Col de Colma, we had a glorious view of Monte Rosa in an atmosphere of the brightest sunshine. On the following day we crossed the Monte Monterone to visit the other Italian lakes on our way to Venice.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THIRD VISIT TO MONTE ROSA: THE GRIMSEL, AND ANOTHER ASCENT OF THE ÆGGISCH-HORN.

The Grimsel — Glacier marks — The Hospice — The Table-d'hôte — Storm on the Grimsel — A goat's eccentricities — Society at the Grimsel — The Rhone Glacier — Walk down the upper valley of the Rhone — Münster — Viesch — The distant Weisshorn.

On the occasion of our third visit to Monte Rosa, in the autumn of 1858, I had the honour of having two members of the Alpine Club for my companions; and as only one of them had previously travelled in my company, I was at first fearful lest my strength and courage should prove unequal to a journey with mountaineers belonging to so formidable a fraternity. However, thanks to their forbearance and patience, and to a few days' gradual training at Lauterbrunnen, I became at last so inured to the labours we had to encounter, that they never had to lose one day in waiting for me to rest; and though each day's journey in my company lasted more hours than it might have done without me,—as those on foot can go faster than a mule's pace,—they were always kind enough to say that

the additional delay afforded them ampler time to enjoy the beautiful scenery, and was no disadvantage. Thus they would not allow me to consider myself an incumbrance.

We had determined that the present excursion should be devoted to exploring the interesting district on the southern side of Monte Rosa. Grindelwald was our place of rendezvous, and we had, while staying there, a most interesting excursion across the lower glacier of Grindelwald to the Zäsenberg Châlet, at the foot of the Strahleck Pass. I had not courage to venture by the Strahleck Pass to the Grimsel, although our guide boasted of having taken a lady across it about twelve years ago. After having thoroughly enjoyed this excursion into the very heart of the glacier, where I gazed with wonder on the stupendous scenes of desolate magnificence which it displayed, I reconciled myself to the more prudent course of crossing the Grand Scheideck, and proceeding by that route to the Grimsel and the valley of the Rhone.

As it is not my intention to attempt any description of the Bernese Oberland, I will simply state that we arrived at the Grimsel on the afternoon of the 25th of August. Our intention was, after having paid another visit to our favourite Æggisch-horn, to cross by the Simplon Pass to Domo d'Ossola, and to commence our explorations in the beautiful Val Anzasca, which, on my former visit, had so much fascinated me. I had visited the Grimsel

before, but retained no pleasing recollections of it. However, on this occasion, the grim Grimsel appeared less grim than my former experience had led me to expect. I had then looked upon its rugged, bare rocks almost with aversion; but they were now invested with a new charm by the interest which they excited in our travelling companion Mr. L—, in consequence of the abundant traces which they exhibit of glacier action. Some of the indications are frequently to be seen indelibly marked on the rocks at the height of several hundred feet above the footpath. It was impossible to resist the contagion of his enthusiasm when we observed the scientific interest which he took in these vestiges of times gone by, and in the structure and character of the various rocks met with on our route. I became conscious for the first time that I had, on former journeys, lost an important source of delight by being very imperfectly acquainted with geology. During the whole of our present excursion we daily experienced additional pleasure in examining every new kind of rock which made its appearance, and in ascertaining its nature and name. The only practical inconvenience which this study occasioned us was that we found ourselves, in the course of our journey, gradually accumulating a collection of geological specimens, which added considerably to the weight of our baggage. Every traveller in the Alps who can combine the pursuit of science with the love of mountain-adventure will have ample opportunity

of increasing his store of knowledge, whether his tastes are geological or botanical; and even a slight smattering of those subjects will be found to add considerably to the interest of an Alpine journey.

I remember perfectly that on visiting the Grimsel a few years previously, I never thought of troubling myself about glacier marks, which now give such great interest to its bare and desolate rocks. The celebrated Höllenplatte, which had then no rail to protect the traveller from slipping down the steep incline several hundred feet, impressed me with some degree of terror as I rode over it in a storm of rain; nor could I then admire the appearance of the rocky ravine which leads to the Hospice, and looks as if it were just riven asunder by some sudden convulsion of nature; so scanty is the vegetation which covers it. "This kind of scenery," said one of my companions, "is just suited to delight the heart of a stonemason." On the present occasion, however, these bare masses of granite rock were of the deepest interest; for all the way from Handeck to the Grimsel they exhibit unmistakeable traces of glacier action, and we were perpetually making discoveries that were new to us. The rocks here are of a character particularly favourable for these observations; for they appear to retain every glacier scratch; whilst in other valleys, where we were about equally certain that enormous glaciers had anciently existed, the rocks were of a kind which chip off in flakes on the surface, and this

sometimes effectually baffled and always impeded our investigations.

But, besides the interest occasioned by the traces of glacier action, the crystalline rocks of the Grimsel exhibit a profuse variety of mosses and lichens, which decorate and colour them. How true and beautiful is the following description of the Alpine mosses!—

"On the broken rocks of the foreground in the crystalline groups, the mosses seem to set themselves consentfully and deliberately to the task of producing the most exquisite harmonies of colour in their power. They will not conceal the form of the rock, but will gather over it in little brown bosses, like small cushions of velvet made of mixed threads of dark ruby silk and gold, rounded over more subdued films of white and grey, with light, crisp and curled edges, like hoar frost on fallen leaves, and minute clusters of upright orange stalks with pointed caps, and fibres of deep green, and gold, and faint purple passing into black, all woven together, and following with unimaginable fineness of gentle growth the undulations of the stone they cherish,..until it is charged with colour so that it can receive no more; and instead of looking rugged, or cold, or stern, or anything that a rock is held to be at heart, it seems to be clothed with a soft, dark leopard-skin, embroidered with arabesque of purple and silver. But in the lower ranges this is not so. The mosses grow in more independent spots, not in such a clinging and tender way over the whole surface; the lichens are far poorer and fewer; and the colour of the stone itself is seen more frequently; altered, if at all, only into a little chillier grey than when it is freshly broken." *

It was six P.M. when we reached the Hospice of the Grimsel. We had, for about an hour previously, observed that the clouds were gathering rather sus-

* Ruskin's 'Modern Painters,' vol. iv. chap. 11.

piciously over our heads; but no rain fell till we came in sight of the Hospice. We had just been examining some patches of snow which lay by the wayside, and on thrusting our alpenstocks into them we noticed that there was a decidedly blue colour in the holes thus made, quite unlike anything which we had ever observed in the purest snow which falls in England or Scotland. This could not be accounted for by the sky, for it was obscured with clouds, which were gradually becoming more murky. The cause must therefore have been in the nature of the snow itself. We were still engaged in discussing this point when suddenly some large drops of rain fell. We were so near the Hospice that we hesitated about unstrapping cloaks or unfurling umbrellas; but our deliberations on that subject were speedily brought to an end by a mountain-shower pouring down upon us in right earnest. It fell with such sudden violence that had we not instantly enveloped ourselves in our cloaks, we should have been wet through in a few minutes, and it was in the midst of a pelting shower that we reached the Hospice. This is a huge, clumsy stone edifice, built to resist the storms of winter, but constructed internally of wood only. We found that it had been considerably changed since our former visit. This was attributable to the circumstance of the late landlord, who had effected some heavy insurances on the old building, having at the conclusion of the season set it on fire, with

the laudable intention, no doubt, of applying the insurance-money in rebuilding it in a style more commodious for travellers. His benevolent intentions, however, were not sufficiently appreciated, and he was prosecuted and imprisoned, and his hotel has now passed into other hands. What it would have been if the old proprietor could have effected his grand designs no one can say, but the building as we now found it is a wretchedly uncomfortable place. It contains a vast number of small bedrooms poorly furnished, and the principal attraction of the house arises from the extraordinary assemblage of persons of all nations who during the short summer season meet every evening at the table d'hôte supper. This is served in a large room constructed of unpainted deal planks, with a low ceiling, and long tables extending from end to end. It is warmed by a large stove which cannot always be lighted, as it sometimes *will* smoke. We were glad, however, to find shelter in this rough building from the storm which now began to rage most violently without. The rain, in a short time, was succeeded by snow, which continued to fall heavily all night, accompanied by a complete hurricane. About forty guests sat down to supper at seven o'clock, and all were full of their various adventures; some, like ourselves, had ascended by way of Handeck; others had come from the Furka and the valley of the Rhone; whilst others had been staying at the Hospice and making excursions

to the Ober Aar Glacier or ascending the Sidelhorn. Much agreeable conversation took place at our end of the table, where the English were principally grouped. A little below where we sat were several Germans, whose display of noisy enthusiasm far exceeded that of our own countrymen. Nearly opposite to us sat a German gentleman with light hair and fair complexion, but tall and of a powerful frame. His cheeks were swollen, and his bloodshot eyes were streaming with moisture, produced by inflammation. He told us that he had just crossed the Strahleck Pass from Grindelwald, and was suffering from the consequences of his exploit; he had had no previous training as a mountaineer, and had plunged at once into one of the most difficult of Alpine excursions. He had succeeded,—but repented. He told us that during his journey across the pass he had suffered exceedingly from the intense light reflected from the snow, and that he had found his green veil so irksome that he could not wear it. The excitement and fatigue had also occasioned him so much thirst that he could not resist the temptation of refreshing himself occasionally with morsels of ice and snow, but they had taken the skin off his tongue, and made his teeth ache so much that he could scarcely eat. He assured us that nothing should induce him to undertake such a pass again, and that the recollection of what he had endured would last him his life. I do not doubt in the least that he spoke with the greatest

sincerity at the time, but I question whether he would adhere to his resolution; for I have always found that at the end of a tour all the hardships become obliterated from the mind, or merely excite a smile, whilst all that was sublime or delightful becomes vividly impressed on the memory, and is apt to constitute our most cherished and sometimes our only recollections. When we went to bed nothing was visible from the little window of our room except the snow, which beat with heavy flakes upon the panes.

Aug. 26.—A terrible hurricane raged all day, and the quantity of snow which had fallen last night was prodigious. It was piled up on the window sills, so as to darken the rooms; nothing could be distinguished on the outside for more than a hundred yards on account of the falling snow; and the place, which is never cheerful, looked inexpressibly dreary. From our bedroom window we had a view of the lake close below it, the water of which looked perfectly black in its framework of pure white snow. On hurrying down to the *salle-à-manger*, in the hope of finding a warm room, we were told that the stove could not be lighted, as it smoked this morning. The room was so bitterly cold, that I wrapped myself up in a warm shawl, whilst other ladies tried to warm themselves with *chaufferettes*. I have a strong suspicion that as wood is costly at this great elevation, the people at the Hospice were not inclined to burn more than was necessary. We were not

able to put a foot out of the Hospice the whole day, but had to amuse ourselves indoors as we best could; and the commonest incident (were it only an incident) gave us occupation. My bedroom window commanded a view of some outbuildings, and I spent some time in watching the eccentricities of a goat sheltered there, which proved to be quite a character. He evidently had the highest appreciation of the shelter which the building afforded, and he came now and then to the open door to look about him, with the air of a person in comfortable circumstances, but his curiosity never prevented him from continuing the operation of eating. When the wind and cold beat upon him too severely, he would retreat into the interior of the building, then he presently returned with a fresh mouthful of the food found there, and looked about him in the keenest spirit of investigation to see whether anything new was going on. It must be confessed that as I was fretting at the loss of time which the bad weather occasioned, I quite envied the poor goat his complacency and spirits, and tried to learn from him a lesson of philosophy and contentment. The goat is very truly described by Von Tschudi as one of the most brisk and lively of tame animals, and amongst his marked characteristics is curiosity. Foreigners are never sorry to have a joke at the expense of an English traveller, and Von Tschudi tells the following story, which if it does not relate to the very goat that excited my attention this

morning, must certainly have reference to one of his progenitors:—"Without being really quarrelsome, the goat is always ready for a sportive combat. An Englishman, sitting one day on the trunk of a tree near the inn on the Grimsel, began to nod over his book, when a he-goat that was straying near approached him curiously, and mistaking the movement of his head for a challenge, ran with his powerful horns full tilt against him. The luckless son of Albion straightway lay sprawling on the ground, with his feet in the air, and the goat, almost frightened at the ease with which his victory had been attained, placed one of his forefeet on the tree, and looked down inquiringly upon his kicking and screaming victim."

In consequence of the depth of the snow which had fallen, forty cows and one hundred and fifty goats which generally graze round the Hospice at this season of the year, had to be driven down a journey of two or three hours to a lower part of the valley to find grass. The pigs, however, were left behind; a fact which I became conscious of at their usual feeding time, by the sudden rush which they made, accompanied by a chorus of squeaking and grunting, as they tumbled one over the other in their eagerness to reach the trough. The Grimsel is a desolate place in which to be weather-bound, but we managed to pass the time with much less ennui than might have been expected. Some of us read, some arranged their botanical collections, others

played at chess, and all gossiped. There were a few arrivals in the course of the day, and every new traveller who came was for a few minutes an object of special attention. The snow continued to fall all day and all night, whilst the wind blew a perfect hurricane.

Aug. 27.—The snow was still falling heavily when we got up this morning. From our window we could see only a short distance, and every object was wreathed in snow. The wind was even higher than it had been the previous day. We were anxious to proceed on our journey, but found it impossible to do so. It was a most amusing and exciting scene in the *salle-à-manger* after breakfast, to see various parties of travellers sally forth in the snow storm, determined to brave all dangers rather than pass another day at the Hospice. A party of three German gentlemen left on horseback, but in about half an hour they returned, saying it was impossible to ride down to Meyringen, but that it might be possible to walk. They described the snow as coming higher than their knees. After having taken some refreshment and dismissed their horses, they made a fresh start, and as they did not return a second time, we inferred that they were more successful in encountering the storm on foot, than they had been on horseback. Later in the day two English ladies and a gentleman summoned courage to take their departure, although it was still snowing a little. One of the ladies was

carried in a *chaise-à-porteur*, and she seemed considerably alarmed. But as they had with them a whole array of guides, porters, and horses, they seemed to feel themselves compelled to proceed at all risks. This is one of the inconveniences which result from having a numerous and expensive retinue, for be the weather as unfavourable as it may, the traveller *must* go on, or at all events he fancies so. The poor lady told me how frightened she had been in coming over the Furka, and asked me anxiously if the path down the Grimsel were equally dangerous. I consoled her as well as I could, and helped to pin her shawls about her with some of my own big pins. It is astonishing to see how ill provided with articles of this kind persons inexperienced in travelling often are. As she could take no exercise to warm her when being carried in the *chaise-à-porteur*, I really feared she might be frozen to death. However, we heard of no misadventure having befallen them.

At about 11.30 A.M. the weather showed symptoms of clearing up, and shortly after noon there was a decided improvement in the appearance of the sky. At 3 P.M. the weather had become fine, and the gentlemen started on an expedition to the Unter Aar Glacier. No lady, however, could venture upon the glacier immediately after such a fall of snow, and I was therefore compelled to remain a prisoner in the Hospice with another English lady as my companion. When I saw my friends start with a guide, and two young dogs

leaping and bounding around them with delight, I felt great disappointment that I could not be of the party. Fortunately there was just then much to amuse me at the Hospice, for there were several very singular persons there, whose peculiarities were most comic. One was a Belgian lady, no longer young, who was travelling by herself, without guide, porter, or companion of any kind. She carried her travelling wardrobe in a small package under her arm; and her custom was to attach herself to some party of tourists provided with a guide, and bound to the same point that she was going to. She had started this morning in company with an old, lean, dark-complexioned German, who had a loud harsh voice, which he always used in conversation at its highest pitch. He was mounted on horseback, and conducted by a guide. But he speedily became frightened at the storm and turned back. The Belgian lady was full of complaints against the guide, who, she said, had walked on in advance quite regardless of herself and her companion, leaving them floundering about, as they best could, in the snow. She described the wind as being so high that she feared lest they should have been blown over; and as they went along there was no trace of the path they should follow except the marks left by the guide's footsteps. She expatiated on the enormity of this guide's conduct with the greatest vehemence, and expressed herself greatly disappointed that they had been obliged to

come back. Her vivid narrative, heightened in its effect by animated gesticulations and dark flashing eyes, drove away all sense of ennui, and lightened the tedium of the day. The old German gentleman also gave much amusement by confidentially informing us that he was a literary character, and intended to write a great work, though he had not yet fixed on the subject. His style of composition appeared to aim at expressing what he considered to be poetical thoughts in plain but high flown prose, and he gave an example which we translated for him into French and English to his great gratification. We were charmed at finding that, although he had not yet written his book or selected his subject, he still expected to be treated with all the profound deference due to successful authorship. Thus the day passed away without my once finding myself without occupation. Just as it became dark the gentlemen returned, full of enthusiasm, from their visit to the glacier and Schreckhorn, and they expatiated with much animation on some large ice cones they had seen there, several of which are about thirty or forty feet high. The night was fine, but intensely cold.

Aug. 28.—The sun shone brightly this morning on the unsullied snow-fields which surrounded us, and we were in the highest spirits at the thoughts of being able to escape from our place of confinement, and descend into the valley of the Rhone. At 8.15 A.M. we left the Grimsel, and I accompanied my companions on

foot. As my plan is never to ride down a steep descent, I should, even if there had been no snow, have walked to the bottom of the mountain. On first starting I found the cold intense,—the very air I breathed seemed to be iced. Although I had only just begun to walk, and could not possibly be fatigued, I was obliged to stop repeatedly to gain a sufficient stock of breath to go on with, but I derived great assistance from using the end of my shawl as a respirator. Perhaps the difficulty which some persons feel in breathing when at a great elevation may be as much attributable to the coldness as to the rarity of the air they inhale.

The Hospice is more than 6000 feet above the level of the sea, situated in a kind of basin formed by precipitous rocks of great height which encircle it on every side, and we had to climb out of this basin by a steep path covered with snow, but as the snow was frozen, it was dry and crisp under the feet and not difficult to walk on. The path at first wound round the little black lake near the Hospice, but we speedily reached the summit of the pass. Every stone was fringed with icicles, and one vast expanse of snow met our eyes. In some places the snow which hung on any projecting object had been blown by the wind into the shape of elegant plumes of feathers, which formed beautiful objects. It was the intensely frozen character of the snow which enabled it to retain this singular appearance, which we had never seen before. When we

reached the summit of the pass, we had a consultation with the porters who carried our baggage as to which route we should take to Münster. The path on the right hand led down directly to Ober Gesteln, and was considerably the shorter, but no traveller had lately come up the mountain in that direction, and the path being covered with snow was undistinguishable. The other path on the left hand proceeded by the Mayenwand to the Rhone Glacier, and as this is the route by which travellers come from the Furka, a well defined track had already been made in the snow, and we therefore, under the advice of our porters, determined to go that way, although it was the longer. We were not sorry also to have another near view of the Rhone Glacier, which we had not seen for several years. The slope of snow down which we passed was so precipitous that I was very glad to find myself on my feet instead of on horseback. There was something bracing and exhilarating in the air, but the descent was rather fatiguing, for in some places, where the snow had not been well trodden down, it was necessary to place one's feet immediately in the foot-prints of the person who had gone before, and as the snow was deep the feet had to be lifted very high. We really might have fancied ourselves in the Arctic regions. We had an opportunity of studying on a small scale the true theory of avalanches, for small patches of snow repeatedly gave way and rolled down the mountain, increasing in bulk

as they went on; some of these were mere tiny avalanches, that would scarcely have overwhelmed a mouse, but others were big enough to have carried us down with them had they caught us in their descent. There was not, however, the slightest real danger. As we got lower down the mountain, the air became sensibly warmer, and I saw numerous little gentians peeping out through the patches of snow. The latter no longer afforded a firm footing, but became soft with miniature rills streaming down from it, and presently our feet sank in deep mire, which occasioned me the only real inconvenience I experienced, for my dress soon became in a deplorable state. I was very glad to find myself, a few minutes afterwards, on the firm turf. We paid a visit to the Rhone Glacier, and all concurred in thinking that it appeared smaller this year than usual. This was perhaps to be attributed to the circumstance that the past summer had been one of the hottest ever known. The glacier was a magnificent object, notwithstanding its diminished size, and it completely fills with its enormous icefield the upper part of the Rhone valley, into which it descends in a fan-like shape, and from the hollow cavern at its base rushes the torrent which becomes the Rhone. While the gentlemen were examining the structure of the ice, and speculating on glacier theories, I collected a handful of lovely little wild flowers, which grew among the stones of the ancient moraine.

We took some bread and butter at the humble little inn near the glacier, and then began our walk down the valley of the Rhone, towards Münster. The descent is during the greater part of the way gradual, and the path tolerable, except in some places where workmen were engaged in improving it, and were blasting the rocks. At one spot where they were at work we could have made a most interesting collection of geological specimens of granite and schistose rocks, but we resisted the temptation from unwillingness to add to the weight of our baggage. Few walks in Switzerland are more beautiful than this, yet strange to say we met during the whole day only one lady and gentleman who were travelling on it. The change of climate since we had left the inhospitable Grimsel was most striking; instead of being surrounded by frost, snow, and weather-beaten rocks covered by a few lichens and saxifrages, we were already in the midst of rich meadows adorned with bright flowers and animated by myriads of red-winged grasshoppers. The path was fringed with bushes, on which hung in profusion the bright scarlet barberry. Before us, at the distance of more than fifty miles, rose the lofty and elegant form of the majestic Weisshorn, with its snowy peak radiant in the sunshine. This splendid object continued in sight throughout almost the whole of our descent of the Rhone valley. We sat down and rested for a long time in a sheltered spot near a little chapel, enjoying the warm sunshine and feasting

our eyes on the beautiful scene before us. The Rhone was rushing in the deep gorge below, and the narrow path we had to follow, which runs along the valley, looked in some places, at a little distance, like a narrow plank placed along the mountain side. We arrived at Münster at 2.15 P.M., where we dined at the Croix d'Or, and I was glad enough to rest after my long walk of 5½ hours. The landlord was very desirous that we should remain all night, and wished us to look at the clean, prettily furnished bedrooms upstairs, of which he is evidently very proud. We reminded him of our having occupied them on a former occasion, and consoled him for our departure by telling him that another English party were coming from the Grimsel, and intended to pass the night at his hotel. We hired a horse at Münster to carry me to Viesch for 10 francs. Before leaving, we inquired after our old acquaintance Thomas Nessier, and we learned that he was not at Münster, but had gone away to seek employment, and that his good horse "Fritz," which I had ridden on my last expedition, was sold. I was disappointed, for I had calculated in my own mind upon being so fortunate as to find Thomas at home, and that he would have accompanied us again, and that I should once more have ridden "Fritz." The man of whom I made the inquiry immediately inferred who we were, and asked if we had not taken Thomas and "Fritz" over the Gries, and whether Thomas had not been our guide over the

Moro. This showed that the journey taken by us two years ago had been well talked over at Münster, and its incidents remembered. There can be no doubt that the guides who accompany travellers have as much amusement in narrating their adventures to their friends as the travellers themselves; and I fancy that Thomas would be particularly felicitous and humorous in his descriptions.

The horse with which I was supplied by the landlord at Münster was but a poor creature compared with "Fritz." I mounted him very willingly, as I had walked quite enough for one day. We then proceeded from Münster to Viesch, where we arrived in 3½ hours. The greater part of the way was most beautiful. We found the little inn at Viesch, where we slept, very comfortable, and the people most obliging. The journey from the Grimsel to Viesch was a very long and fatiguing day's work, though the path for the greater part of it was continuously down hill. The porters were much exhausted. One of them, indeed, when we were at Münster, procured his brother to carry his burden on for him to Viesch. Some travellers, who are rapid walkers, and have no lady with them to act as a check on their speed, manage occasionally to go in a single day from the Hospice of the Grimsel to the hotel on the Æggisch-horn, and we met with one or two who had done so. But the distance is too great to make such an excursion pleasurable, and the last portion up the

excessively steep side of the Æggisch-horn must try most severely the strength of any one who has already, before beginning that ascent, walked enough for a reasonable day's journey.

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER VISIT TO THE ÆGGISCH-HORN — THE MÄRJELEN SEE AND ALETSCH GLACIER.

Once more on the summit of the Æggisch-horn — Fleeting mists — A circular rainbow — Visiting cards left — The Märjelen See — Icebergs and icecliffs — The Aletsch Glacier — Fall of an icecliff — Return by the water-course — Descent to Viesch — Snow-bridges and concealed crevasses on the Aletsch Glacier.

Aug. 30.—We left the greater part of our baggage at Viesch, and proceeded at 10 A.M. to the Hôtel de la Jungfrau on the Æggisch-horn. I persuaded H— to have a horse as well as myself, for the day was exceedingly hot, and the sunshine scorching, and I remembered well how severe and continuous the ascent is, without one break. Our friend, Mr. L—, walked up the whole way without fatigue, and apparently indifferent to the hot rays of the sun. We found that the path had been improved a little below the hotel, on reaching which we were shown to the very room we had occupied on our former visit. We had some luncheon, and looked over the visitors' book with much curiosity. Then after a short rest we engaged a guide, and started on foot for the summit of the mountain. The path is very good until one comes to the place where, on our former visit, I had dismounted from my

horse, but it then becomes exceedingly rapid and difficult. There had been a great fall of snow here as well as at the Grimsel, and this made the path much worse to climb than usual. However, I found no real difficulty in accomplishing the undertaking, and for the second time I reached the top in triumph without once receiving the slightest assistance. We were an hour and a half in walking from the hotel to the summit. The day was tolerably clear, but we could not see in any direction nearly so far as on the former occasion, when we stood here in the purer atmosphere of early morning. We had great pleasure in introducing Mr. L— to this superb panorama. We had said so much in its praise, that we feared it could not equal his expectations, but he exclaimed that it was one of the finest things he had ever seen, and truly magnificent. For my part, I was delighted to find myself again on this wonderful peak, and looked round on all sides with intense delight. I have already given a description of it on my former visit.* We were again much struck with the enormous length of the Aletsch Glacier. The Aletsch-horn was cloudless, and so were the Jungfrau, the Mönch, and the Eiger; but Mont Blanc was quite invisible. On the Monte Rosa side the atmosphere was dull, and we lost to a great extent the grand view of that chain. However, the tall peak of the Weisshorn towered high above the clouds which enveloped its huge

* Ante, p. 69.

flanks, and we also saw, but only for a few minutes, the noble crest of Mont Cervin; though its centre and base were buried in thick mists. The guide pointed out to us the exact route followed by those who come from the Grimsel over the tremendous pass of the Ober Aarjoch. It certainly would not suit timid people. On looking down below to the Märjelen See, we saw with surprise that it presented a very unusual appearance, for it seemed to be nearly dry, and the huge icebergs which generally float about and give it the appearance of the Arctic regions in miniature, were stranded high and dry on its side and in its bed, where they looked as helpless as whales thrown by a storm on the coast. Our guide explained to us that the Märjelen See had only last night burst a barrier, and that its waters were in consequence almost drained away. This lake is at all times one of the most remarkable things in Switzerland, and we determined to give it a thorough investigation the next day. On looking in the direction of Monte Leone, which presents a very splendid appearance when viewed from the Æggisch-horn, there is seen among the cluster of mountains near it a remarkable object, which looks in the distance as if it were an enormous castle, built in the almost inaccessible hollow which lies between the mountain heights. This had puzzled us on our former visit, and we now examined it again through our glass without being able to arrive at any conclusion respecting it. I have since been told that on a recent occasion

it attracted the attention of one of our greatest geologists so strongly, that he made an excursion to the spot, and discovered the object to consist of the remains of a gigantic moraine, formed in past ages by immense glaciers which have now disappeared.

It was decidedly cold as we sat on the summit of the mountain, and although there was not much wind, the light thin mists whirled about below us with amazing rapidity. There is always a chilliness felt at great elevations, especially when one sits still after having become warmed by the exertion of the ascent. We had, however, taken with us plenty of wrappers, so that we were able to examine the view thoroughly without fear of taking cold. The scene which presents itself from a lofty peak like that of the Æggisch-horn never continues the same for any length of time, but varies almost every minute. This is owing to atmospheric changes. We watched the fleeting mists rise from the west, and come boiling up over the Aletsch Glacier, where they were met by a current of wind from the north, which opposed their further progress, and for a time quite dispersed them; then a fresh supply came floating up in greater density, and, after a struggle with the wind from the north, gained the mastery, and made their way along the glacier to the eastern side of the Æggisch-horn, up which they gradually curled until we were enveloped. While this process was going on, and we were ourselves still out of the mist, we observed a

most interesting object: — a beautiful rainbow, which formed, not an arc, such as we generally see, but a complete circle, became visible: it appeared to be quite close to us, and in this circular rainbow each of us seemed to see his own figure precisely in the centre, like a picture in a frame. The effect was magical. A German lady and gentleman came up to the summit just in time to see this curious phenomenon, but they had scarcely begun to express their wonder and delight before a dense mass of vapour which had been gradually creeping up reached the peak, where we were, destroyed the rainbow, and obliterated the scenery. We immediately made room for the new comers; for there is not space on the summit to accommodate a large party, and the rocks afford so insecure a resting place, that it is necessary to select with great care the spot where you station yourself. As an illustration of this, I may mention that there was on this occasion a broken bottle on the top, in which several travellers had deposited their cards, to indicate to their friends that they had been there. One of my companions drew out his card-case to do the same thing, when accidentally the whole packet of cards slipped from his fingers, and fell dispersed in the interstices of the rocks on which we stood, and they tumbled down to such a depth that it was with the greatest difficulty that any of them could afterwards be recovered. Some had fallen so far, that it was impossible to reach them. The

summit is in fact composed of immense detached blocks of loose stone, piled one upon another like a heap of lumps of sugar, and the only wonder is that they hold together; but their prodigious size and weight ensure this. When we began our descent we had to grope our way down as well as we could in the thick mist, but in less than half an hour the cloud which covered us opened again and showed us the blue sky. We speedily regained our hotel, delighted with our expedition.

Aug. 30.—This was one of the finest days of the season, and we made the most of it. We had every advantage: the most exquisite weather, the sublimest scenery, and the highest spirits. At about half-past 8 A.M. we started on an expedition to the Märjelen See and the Aletsch Glacier. As my companions wished to go as far up the Aletsch Glacier as the time would allow, we had two guides, one of whom was to devote himself to me, and conduct me back to the hotel whenever it was proper for me to return. The walk from the hotel to the Märjelen See occupied an hour and a half. In order to reach it, it is necessary, before beginning the descent, to cross the steep crest of the intervening mountain; and we took the shortest cut over the summit. There was along part of the way some steep climbing, and now and then a good scramble over the rocks. The guides were evidently not much accustomed to conduct ladies on this excursion; for they showed symptoms of doubt-

ing whether I should accomplish it, and probably considered me an incumbrance. On one occasion, when we came to a place which presented some little difficulty, the principal guide turned round and inquired of one of my companions if the woman (*das weib*) could pass there, to which the reply was, "Oh! certainly." When he presently saw me do so, he appeared to be happier in his mind, or at all events resigned to his fate, and he led the way with greater willingness.

Not long after we had left the hotel, the mist rose from the valley and surrounded us so completely that we could not see more than twenty yards before us, and it would have been impossible for any one to have found his way in the fog without an intimate knowledge of the path. It is never agreeable to be under a cloud in any sense, but we enjoyed the opportunity of witnessing on this occasion some very curious atmospheric effects. The mist opened and disclosed to us, towering up at a great height in the air, the peak of a snow-clad mountain, the lower portion of which was still veiled from our sight; and as this solid peak had no visible connecting link with the earth, it seemed to belong to the very sky. The phenomenon was most striking and beautiful. When a mountain is wholly visible from its base to its summit, the mind scarcely forms an adequate idea of the altitude to which it stretches up in the sky: it is often therefore a positive advantage to have, floating in the air, a few clouds which, by obscuring the base and centre of the

mountain, while they leave its summit clear, enable a juster appreciation of the real height to be formed by the spectator.

When we reached the Märjelen See we sat down and examined it with the greatest admiration and astonishment. This lake is fed by water supplied from the Aletsch Glacier, to which it forms a lateral outlet, though the principal part of the drainage of that glacier is at its southward termination, where the Massa torrent flows from it, and empties itself into the Rhone a little above Brieg. The glacier, where it touches the Märjelen See, does not form a great cavern, but breaks off in huge masses, which fall into the lake, and thus enormous perpendicular cliffs of deep-blue ice are formed. These cliffs extend for more than half a mile across the ravine, where the lateral outlet is. The lake was now about three-parts dry, but there was still deep water at the base of the ice-cliffs, which, in consequence of the draining of the lake, rose more than one hundred feet above its level; in ordinary times the height is about sixty feet. As the glacier moves downwards in its long course from the southern side of the Jungfrau and Mönch to the Massa torrent, it misses the support of the rocks when it meets this lateral outlet, and large pieces of many hundred tons split off by their own weight and tumble into the lake, where, when there is plenty of water, they float about like icebergs in the North Sea. We approached some of these icebergs which had been left dry, and

walked round them, and even through a kind of arcade which was in one of the largest. The ice of which they were composed was of a deep-blue colour when viewed in the mass, but of the purest and clearest white when in smaller pieces. The fragments of the glacier which strewed the bed of the lake were of various sizes—some as big as a cottage, and some as small as mincemeat. We observed that many of the mud-covered stones which had been left dry abounded with a kind of sandworm or serpula, which lives in this intensely cold water just drained from the glacier, and kept icy-cold by the enormous icebergs which float in it. By an unfortunate accident, Mr. L—'s thermometer was broken, so that we could not ascertain the temperature of the water. Nothing could be more singular than the appearance of the enormous ice-cliffs which towered above the lake. They were already split by immense fissures, and in some places hung over the lake, ready to fall with a tremendous crash at any instant. We appeared to see into the very heart of the glacier, and all its inmost depths were disclosed. Nothing indeed could exceed the exquisite beauty and delicacy of its colour, of which no description can convey an adequate idea. In consequence of the sudden draining away of the greater part of the lake, the ice-cliffs, which are generally half hidden in the deep water, were laid bare nearly to their foundations; and it was curious to observe the different character and colour of the ice above and below the

usual water-line,—that below being of a far deeper and more brilliant hue. In some places the ice assumed the most fantastic shapes, and at one spot it appeared to form a kind of landing-place from the lake to the glacier, with rude steps and balustrades of ice leading up to small deep-blue caverns. But where, to complete this scene of enchantment, was the fairy boat, and where the Ice Queen to step forth from those lovely caverns and descend the staircase?

After we had crossed the bed of the lake and reached the other side, we began to scramble along a rough and narrow path, which led us on to the glacier at a point beyond that where the lofty ice-cliffs terminate. We got upon the glacier without difficulty, and when the guide who had me in his especial charge held me firmly by the hand, his rigid arm felt as hard as iron. I considered myself perfectly safe; and indeed this upper part of the Aletsch Glacier is remarkably smooth and level, and we saw none of those immense crevasses which on the lower Grindelwald Glacier seemed ready every moment to engulf us in an abyss. In fact the recent fall of snow now completely concealed the greater number of the crevasses, and gave the glacier an appearance of more safety than it possessed; for it really has many small crevasses, and as these were covered by the fresh snow, it was necessary that our chief guide should carefully probe them with his alpenstock to discover where they were, and enable us to avoid them. After we had

proceeded a considerable distance towards the centre of the glacier, from which a fine view was obtained of the wilderness of ice and snow around us, and of the lofty snow-covered mountains which hemmed it in—the Aletsch-horn, the Mönch, and the Jungfrau being especially conspicuous—we sat down to lunch, first spreading a Scotch plaid over the snow. The sunshine was intensely hot, and was quite dazzling as reflected from the glacier; it positively scorched the faces and blistered the lips. Our wine, which was speedily cooled under a heap of snow, was drunk with fragments of ice floating in it, which made it most refreshing.

My companions were very desirous of making further progress up the glacier in the direction of the Jungfrau, as far as they could; and as they could walk faster without me, it was arranged that I should return to the hotel with one of the guides, while the other conducted them onwards; but I was so enchanted with the scene that it was with much reluctance I acceded to this arrangement. When we rose from our seats, my plaid, on which we had been sitting, was found almost frozen to the glacier, and required a good pull to free it, though the sun had all the time been shining upon us with great power. Wishing my companions a successful expedition, I turned back again; and, taking my guide's hand, we literally retraced our steps over the snow, putting our feet in the holes which we had made as we went. They had now become partly filled

by the half-melted snow, and the process was therefore by no means a pleasant one; but our object was to wind our way safely among the crevasses until we reached the edge of the glacier. This we accomplished successfully, and I soon found myself again by the side of the Märjelen See, where I sat down, and was once more lost in wonder at the beauty of the scene. I was especially desirous to see some of the enormous loosened blocks of ice break off the glacier, and tumble like a gigantic ruin into the lake below. I observed that some of the fissures in the ice were perceptibly wider than they had been a couple of hours before, and momentarily expected to witness some grand catastrophe, but in this I was disappointed. A few considerable fragments occasionally fell with a splash into the water, but no large mass followed them. At last, my time and patience being exhausted, I left the lake; but I had scarcely lost sight of it when I heard three tremendous crashes, which were re-echoed like thunder from the mountains. Accordingly, if I had remained only five minutes longer, my wish would have been gratified.

No person should omit visiting the Märjelen See, which is an object of the greatest singularity and beauty, notwithstanding the insignificance of its appearance when viewed at a distance from the top of the Æggisch-horn.

My guide asked me, as we returned, whether I would go back by the route we had come, over the crest of the

mountain, or follow the watercourse which conveys water to the hotel round its shoulder, which is the more level way, though there is no path. I chose the latter, as being a new route, and was extremely glad of it, for I found that the watercourse, in winding round the hill-side, proceeds at a considerable elevation above, and affords a very fine view of the Viesch Glacier. There was very good footing part of the way, but our course was mostly along the brink of a deep precipice, and occasionally we had to scramble over huge round stones, which gave me a feeling of insecurity lest I should slip into the gulf below. I would therefore not advise any one who has not a steady head to take this walk by the watercourse. I gathered a large bunch of wild flowers, to which my worthy guide added some rhododendrons, which he obtained by scrambling down some steep places of most formidable appearance. These lovely pink flowers were soon placed in my hat, and I had some difficulty in persuading the man that I did not want any more, and thus keeping him from risking his life in the search for them. We suddenly came upon a herdsman watching his cattle, and he uttered an exclamation of surprise when he saw me following the guide. To this my conductor replied very quietly, "Englishwomen go everywhere;" and after a little chat we continued our journey.

One great charm of this day's excursion was the variety of the scenes through which we passed. On

reaching the hotel I told the 'landlord' that it was a pity he did not make the watercourse broad enough for a mule-path, as many ladies might not have strength enough to scramble up by the way we went, or nerve enough to walk on such a narrow ledge as that by which I had returned. He replied, with very good humour, that he had already spent a great deal of money in building his hotel; and that when he was out of debt he should be only too happy to make that and many other improvements, but that to enable him to accomplish this, I must send all my friends to his hotel, for he had enough to do to carry it on. This no doubt is true. He really deserves much credit for the exertions he has made and the money he has spent to make his house comfortable; and the watercourse itself, which has been constructed along a difficult route for a distance of several miles, in order to bring pure spring water to the hotel, shows to what an extent he is prepared to go, if he meets with the encouragement he deserves. This hotel has already become a favourite rendezvous of the members of the Alpine Club, who assemble here during the season in great numbers; and there are few places from which the lovers of sublime scenery can bring away a richer store of glorious recollections.

As my companions did not intend to return to the hotel, and had agreed to meet me at Viesch, I saw the baggage placed on a mule, and then proceeded on foot

down the mountain. Leaving the man to take care of the mule, I followed the sledge-path, which is steeper but shorter than that by which the mules go. I found abundance of wild raspberries and strawberries near a little brook, and they were very refreshing. Near the bottom a pretty young woman overtook me. I addressed her with the usual "Guten Abend." She returned my salutation, and told me that the path was very dirty just below, and that she also was going to Viesch, and would conduct me by a pleasanter way through the meadows. She had on her back one of the large baskets of the country, well filled with food for her cattle, which she had been cutting on the mountain, but in spite of that she walked much more lightly and quite as fast as I could, with my alpenstock to assist me. She said she was accustomed to carry the load, and did not feel it.

Shortly after I had reached the hotel at Viesch, the gentlemen joined me and told me their adventures. They had walked a considerable distance up the glacier towards the Jungfrau, and had looked with longing eyes at the point between that mountain and the Mönch, which is said to command one of the finest views in Switzerland; but the day was already too far advanced to enable them to go there, and they found that even if time had permitted the attempt, the crevasses concealed by the snow were so dangerous, that it was unsafe to go farther without ropes in the present state of the glacier.

Mr. L—, in springing over a concealed crevass, which the guide had crossed, set his feet a few inches too far, and found, when he took his jump, that his foot penetrated through the snow bridge, and on landing the other foot, by which he was to gain the opposite side of the crevass, he felt it also sink through the snow. A strong arm, however, was soon at his service, and he was extricated without difficulty; but on looking through and probing the holes made by his feet, so great was the depth that the bottom of the crevass could not be seen or reached. Each of the party afterwards found himself in his turn sinking through a snow bridge, and as they had no rope to hold them together, it would have been exceedingly rash to have persevered. A rope ought always to be taken on an excursion over a glacier. When they had got back to the Märjelen See, they had proceeded to the Viesch Glacier, and descended by its right bank to the valley of the Rhone. To go from the Märjelen See to Viesch, by the side of the Viesch Glacier, takes about an hour longer than to return to the Hôtel de a Jungfrau and descend thence; the path also is much more steep and difficult. Indeed I was assured that some places were so exceedingly rough and precipitous as to be quite unsuited to ladies; but I found on inquiry, that there was nothing nearly so bad as what ladies have to encounter at the "cheminée" of the Breven, and its difficulties therefore are not insuperable. I had noticed, as I walked above the Viesch

Glacier on my return by the water-course, that it was of a very different character to the Aletsch Glacier: the latter presents, as I have said, a tolerably level surface and gentle incline, but the Viesch Glacier is a frozen cascade of enormous icebergs. We were all a little tired when we got to Viesch, and while dinner was preparing, refreshed ourselves with a sound nap. I had my own adventures to relate, and to listen to the descriptions of my friends. A hundred inquiries followed, mingled with animated discussions; all feeling of fatigue was then forgotten, and the good people of the inn seemed astonished at the lateness of the hour when we retired to rest.

CHAPTER X.

THE PASS OF THE SIMPLON, AND A SECOND VISIT TO THE VAL ANZASCA.

Brieg — Continental facilities for forwarding luggage — Conduct of the hotel-keeper at Brieg — The Simplon Pass —A slow coach and bad whip — Village of Simplon — The Gorge of Gonda by a rush-light — Perils of journeying in the dark to Isella — Sardinian officials — Domo d'Ossola — Ascent of the Val Anzasca — Hotel at Ponte Grande, and the landlord — Our proposed guide, "Young Greasy" — The barrier of Morgen — View of Monte Rosa — Macugnaga.

Aug. 31.—We left Viesch this morning in a small carriage, starting at a much later hour than we ought, and arrived at Brieg precisely at noon. We had sent our heavy luggage there by the diligence from Berne, and were glad to find that it had arrived safely. One great advantage in travelling abroad is that you can always forward luggage in this way, and thus be prepared with a fresh costume for the cities, after leaving the mountains. Luggage sent to the place of destination, and directed "Poste Restante," is sure to be found on your arrival unless there is an intermediate custom house; but it will not of course be permitted to pass from one frontier to another without examination, and travellers who overlook this circumstance frequently get themselves into a difficulty. They charged us twenty-

one francs for conveying a portmanteau and box from Berne to Brieg. We went to the Hôtel de la Poste, and explained that we wished to go on immediately to Isella, by the Simplon. The diligence only goes over the Simplon at night, and it therefore is of no use to travellers who wish to see the scenery. The people of the hotel were evidently very anxious that we should not post, but should hire one of their carriages; and when H— inquired for the Poste aux Chevaux in order to obtain our luggage, we were assured that the Maître de Poste was not at his office, and would not be there for some hours. When, however, we explained for what purpose we wished to see him, he was at once forthcoming, being brought to his office from a neighbouring café, where he was making himself comfortable. We were not at all pleased with the manner in which we were treated by the landlord of the Hôtel de la Poste. He insisted that we must have a carriage with three horses, as they would go so much quicker than two; and he charged eighty francs for conveying us over the Simplon to Domo d'Ossola, but we were to be at liberty to stop and sleep where we pleased on the way. We were also to pay five francs for drink-money to the driver. As the landlord insisted so much on our having three horses, we expected that they would be able to take us along at a respectable pace, but they never did anything more than walk during the whole journey; and the driver was a totally inefficient person, and acknowledged subse-

quently that he had never been over the Simplon before. All the landlord seemed to care for was that we should take from him so many horses, and engage to pay him so many francs.

Of all the passes which lead across the Alps to Italy, the Simplon is perhaps the most travelled; and it is deeply interesting, not only from the beauty of its scenery, but from its historical associations. It is a noble monument of the genius of Napoleon, as the Great St. Bernard is of his daring. But although these two passes are the highways of travellers, there is no other place where, in our excursions in the neighbourhood of Monte Rosa, we ever met with less considerate treatment, or were placed under circumstances of a more disagreeable character. The truth is, that at Brieg and Martigny the art of taking as much as possible of the traveller's money and doing as little as possible for it, has by great and constant experience been perfected into a system.

We left Brieg precisely at 1 P.M., and made sure that we should be able to reach Isella without the slightest difficulty before dark. We were full of enthusiasm at the idea of being once more in the beautiful valleys of Piedmont, where no snows would imprison us as at the Grimsel. Our feeling of exultation was, however, a little disturbed at finding that our horses never proceeded beyond a foot's pace, and that of the slowest kind. It was impossible to make any impression on the driver,

who sat like an automaton on the box; he had, as I firmly believe, seldom handled reins or whip before, and seemed confounded at the novelty of his situation. The road was excellent all the way up, but the scenery not very striking,—the glories of the pass are on the Italian side. It was a misty afternoon, and Monte Leone, which is the principal object on the Swiss side, was not visible.

At 6.15 P.M. we reached the dirty, uninteresting village of Simplon. We had stopped about an hour on the road, to take some refreshment and rest the horses. As we approached Simplon we had several anxious discussions as to whether we should sleep there, or go on to Isella, where there is a much better inn. We made many inquiries of our coachman as to the time it would take to go from Simplon to Isella, but we could get no satisfactory answer from him,—in fact he did not know. On referring to our 'Handbook,'* we found it stated that the drive from Simplon to Domo d'Ossola was one of three hours and a half, and we inferred therefore that we could easily get from Simplon to Isella in an hour and a half at the utmost. Accordingly we determined to go on to Isella, unless upon arriving at Simplon we found that the place presented a more inviting appearance than we had been led to expect. Just as we were balancing these matters in our minds, a carriage containing a party of travellers

* Murray's 'Handbook for Switzerland,' 7th edition, p. 180.

drawn by two horses only, passed our creeping vehicle with the greatest ease, got to the inn before us, and secured the best rooms. On arriving at the inn, it presented externally such a sorry, miserable appearance, that we did not feel inclined to enter. A new inn is being built nearly opposite, but is still unfinished; and as all the accounts we had of the old one were unfavourable, we proceeded at once to Isella, where we calculated upon arriving before eight o'clock at the latest. But alas! it took us more than three hours to get there, for the horses were completely knocked up, and were just as incapable of trotting down hill as they had been of trotting up. The driver had purchased on the road a clumsy wooden drag for the wheel, which was nothing but a log of wood with a rough notch cut in it, such as is generally used on these mountains; this notch was so badly made, that directly we began to descend, the wheel slipped out of it, and the driver had to stop, get down from the box, and readjust it; no sooner did he mount again and drive on, than the same thing once more occurred: this was repeated every five minutes until we lost all patience. My companions then got out of the carriage and superintended the process of tying the drag to the wheel with a rope. This made it hold together a little longer, but a few smart jerks in descending a rough bit of steep road would once more unfasten it, and we thus found ourselves exposed to a series of delays for which there was no remedy. If we

had attempted to proceed without any drag, we should, on such a road and with such a driver, have been exposed to the greatest danger. To our intense mortification we found it was rapidly becoming dark, and that we were doomed to be benighted on that part of the pass which most requires the safety afforded by daylight. Shortly before arriving at the gorge of Gonda, where the perpendicular rocks rise to an immense height, and a boiling torrent rages between them at a distance of only a few yards from the road, our driver stopped at a small cottage, and borrowed a lantern, with two or three bits of candle, none more than a couple of inches long. It became as dark as pitch when we penetrated the terrible gorge, and we might really have found ourselves in a critical position if Mr. L— had not walked on before, holding the lantern in his hand, and showing the way. We also alighted and followed close behind him; then the driver himself at last got down and led his horses. The whole party kept as much as possible within the small circle of light given by the wretched tallow candle, for on one side of the road there was a precipice above and on the other a precipice below us; and although the darkness rendered the torrent no longer visible, we could hear it roaring close at hand, and warning us of what would be our fate should we tumble into it. The driver, who was in a great fright, now admitted that he had never been over the pass but once before, and on being closely questioned, at last confessed

that this was his first experience of the Italian side of the Simplon. Accordingly the landlord of the Hôtel de la Poste at Brieg, who is much more favourably spoken of in the 'Handbook' than our experience warrants, had coolly risked our lives by sending us over the pass with bad horses and an inexperienced driver!

In this wretched plight we wound our way in the murky darkness through the gloomy galleries and narrow ledges of the gorge of Gonda, and it seemed as if our journey would never come to an end. I was at last persuaded to get once more into the carriage, lest I should over-fatigue myself, and when I did so, I fell into a kind of half trance, trying to look out of the window, but unable to discern any object, or even to get a glimpse of the outline of the mountains which rose up precipitously on each side of the gorge, and intensified the darkness. I observed, however, the tiny lamp of the glowworm shining steadily on the roadside; and I could distinguish the light of the lantern which piloted the way. Then sleep would overpower me, till a jerk of the carriage made me conscious that the drag had again come off, and I was obliged to start up and make the fact known to my companions by crying out to them. How heartily glad I was when at about half-past nine at night we halted under a gateway at Isella!

The Sardinian officials came out to inquire about our passports, and to know if we had anything "to declare;" but when they found that we were benighted English

travellers, nothing could be more kind than their behaviour. Our luggage was suffered to pass unopened; and our passports, when visé'd, were sent to us at the hotel. We found a very comfortable little inn at Isella, and were glad indeed to obtain there the refreshment of food and rest. The chagrin occasioned by our disappointment was not only speedily forgotten, but the unsatisfactory way in which we had passed through, without seeing the glories of this magnificent pass, formed an inexhaustible source of amusement.

Sept. 1.—The morning was beautiful, but a few clouds were floating in the blue sky. No sooner did we make our appearance at breakfast, than our Jehu of last night, whose duty it was to take us on to Domo d'Ossola, informed us that he had no passport, and he therefore urgently begged that we would let him return with his carriage and horses to Brieg, and allow ourselves to be forwarded on to Domo d'Ossola in another carriage to be provided by the landlord of the inn at Isella. As we were not at all fascinated by his skill as a driver, or by the quality of his horses, we told him we had no objection to let him go on the terms he proposed, but that we should pay nothing to any one until we had been duly conveyed to Domo d'Ossola. He was quite willing that this should be the arrangement, and no sooner had he obtained our assent than he disappeared, and we saw no more of him. The landlord immediately provided us with a carriage and a

pair of horses, and we had a delightful drive to Domo d'Ossola. We had already at Isella quitted the desolate region of the higher Alps, and our road, which led by a rapid descent down the Val di Vedro, commanded a magnificent view of the wide expanse of the luxuriant valley in which Domo d'Ossola is placed. This valley is formed by the Tosa, which runs towards the south till it falls into the Lago Maggiore. I have already described our visit to the falls of the Tosa, in the upper part of the Val Formazza, on the occasion of our visit to the Gries. We were particularly struck with the luxuriance and beauty of the fertile valley of Domo d'Ossola as we entered it over the lofty bridge at Crevola, where the stream from the Simplon falls into the Tosa. The whole valley was glowing in the bright sunshine of an Italian sky, and displayed the rich productiveness of an Italian climate. We no longer gazed upon sterile mountain-peaks, fringed at the base by a few fir-trees, but we had before us mountains covered even to their summits with the richest and most varied foliage of noble forest-trees, and in the valley which they encircled were crops of tall Indian corn, patches of hemp and buckwheat, and vines which hung in graceful festoons from the green maple.

We conveyed our heavy luggage with us across the Simplon from Brieg to Domo d'Ossola, in order that we might pass it through the Sardinian custom-house. Not wishing to be further encumbered with it, we now

sent it on to Turin by the diligence, directed "Poste Restante," and received a written receipt, on presenting which at the proper office in Turin a few weeks afterwards, we found it perfectly safe. As we intended to go no farther to-day than Ponte Grande, we stayed for several hours at Domo d'Ossola, where we arrived about noon, and as it happened to be a fête-day we found plenty to amuse us. We first engaged a carriage with a pair of horses to take us to Ponte Grande after dinner, then we went to the Hôtel Albasini, and ordered that meal to be prepared at 2 o'clock. This hotel is a large bathing establishment, but the season was now over, and the place looked deserted. We experienced great civility, and the landlord, a brother of the person who keeps the inn at Borca, is equally renowned for skilful management of his cuisine. We certainly had every reason to be satisfied with the excellent dinner which he supplied.

Having made these important arrangements, we amused ourselves with strolling through the town, and looking at the people who thronged it. We found in the market-place abundance of the delicious peaches which abound in North Italy, and which are infinitely superior to the hard, stony, tasteless specimens we afterwards met with in Florence and Central Italy. We speedily purchased a heap of these refreshing peaches, which cost but a trifle. The houses in Domo d'Ossola are picturesque and thoroughly Italian-looking

buildings, and the whole place offered a strong contrast to what we had left behind us in Switzerland. There was a great crowd of people in the Cathedral, where the bishop was officiating in full state. All were dressed in their gayest apparel; most of the women wore red handkerchiefs on their heads, which gave them a very striking appearance, but their hard, weather-beaten faces were not handsome. There were a few ladies who wore black lace mantillas thrown over their heads in a very piquant style, but none were pronounced goodlooking. We saw, however, one young lady dressed in the Parisian fashion, and surrounded by a crowd of admirers, who was really pretty, and seemed to be considered the belle of the place. The town was gaily decorated with banners, flowers, and festoons of evergreens. There were wooden stalls in the streets and at the door of the Cathedral, where there was an active sale going on of gaudy-coloured pictures of the Virgin and saints; whilst for the younger members of society there was an attractive display of sweetmeats, which seemed to be in equal demand. After dinner we left Domo d'Ossola at 3 P.M., and a pair of excellent horses took us to Ponte Grande in two hours and twenty minutes; but we were charged 35 francs for the carriage, besides having to pay 3 francs to the driver for drink-money. We thought this an extravagant demand, and should not have agreed to pay it had it not been stated in the

'Handbook'* that it is a drive of five hours from Domo to Ponte Grande, which is more than double what it proved to be. This great difference in the distance has probably been occasioned by recent improvements. In some places the solid rock has been blasted for a long way, and the road, which is now excellent, must have been constructed at a vast expense.

We were delighted to find ourselves once more entering the beautiful Val Anzasca. In every nook where vines could be planted they were growing luxuriantly, trellised over horizontal poles which were supported by whitewashed pillars of masonry. We also observed a few fine fig-trees and some splendid specimens of the walnut-tree. Indeed the vegetation of the whole of this valley, as high as the barrier of Morgen, is remarkably beautiful, and the people who inhabit it are celebrated for their good looks and their neat dresses. On our arrival at the hotel at Ponte Grande, the old landlord came out to receive us with unwonted civility. He has not the reputation of being over attentive to his guests. There is scarcely an hotel in Piedmont that has been better abused than this by a multitude of travellers, but according to our experience it does not altogether deserve the unmitigated censures which have been cast upon it. The greater part of the edifice has been rebuilt in a style that might be called hand-

* Murray's 'Handbook for Switzerland,' 7th edition, p. 182.

some, and the house would be quite satisfactory if it were only kept tolerably clean. The cuisine was good; some friends we met there pronounced the "Madére" to be excellent, and we had no reason to complain of the charges. The great fault of the place is the want of vigilant superintendence by an active landlord. At present the waiters, stable-men, and other hangers on, are allowed to do just as they please. Adjoining the *salle-à-manger* there is a billiard-room, through which one must pass in order to reach the former apartment; this billiard-room is the great rendezvous of all these people, who, with their coats off and their shirt-sleeves tucked up, are engaged in playing games nearly half the day, knocking about large balls, fully double the size of those used in England. These dirty officials occasionally, in the intervals of their game, take a cool and deliberate survey of what is going on in the *salle-à-manger*, and note the progress which the guests have made in eating their dinners. The bed-rooms, though not large, were tolerably comfortable, and not badly furnished, though there was no superfluity of chairs or tables. I was assured that the room assigned to me had been occupied, only a few weeks before, by one of the sons of the King of Sardinia. I was bound to consider that what was good enough for royalty must be good enough for me; but must confess, that as the stabling, according to the plan too frequent in Italy, is built on the basement immediately

under the principal rooms, a peculiar odour was always perceptible, which, although it may not be unpleasant to a groom, can scarcely be agreeable to anybody else. To escape from this odour was impossible, and whether the windows were open or shut it was always the same. There was also a perfect plague of flies—a natural consequence of the same cause. One of the most amusing things at this hotel is to read the tissue of abuse heaped on the landlord in his own visitors' book, which lies open in the *salle-à-manger* for your inspection, with the most perfect indifference on the part of the landlord as to its contents.

As our plan was, after we had finished our explorations of the Val Anzasca, to cross by the Baranca Pass to Varallo, it was necessary that we should return from Macugnaga to Ponte Grande; for it was from thence that we should have to start on the expedition. We thought it advisable therefore to make inquiries about the Pass before we proceeded to Macugnaga, that we might know what we had to expect when we came back. The more usual plan of travelling from the Val Anzasca to the Val Sesia is to go from Borca across the Turlo Pass; but all travellers seem to agree that the Turlo is on the whole excessively tedious and uninteresting, and we accordingly made up our minds to cross by the Baranca into the beautiful Val Mastalone. We sent for the landlord to consult him, and we soon found that he was profoundly ignorant on the subject,

but not willing to confess the fact. Could he supply us with a guide? "Oh! certainly." Did the guide understand the pass well? "Most undoubtedly." Well then we would see this same guide and converse with him, and enlighten our benighted understandings from his store of knowledge. After some demur the worthy man was brought in from the adjoining billiard-room, with his coat off, his arms still bare, and his face greasy and dirty. He instantly volunteered his services on reasonable terms; but as he looked very unlike one of the famous guides of the Oberland or Chamounix, he was interrogated a little about his qualifications, and we discovered that he had never been over the pass but once, though he professed to be thoroughly acquainted with it. This was not very encouraging; but the same thing will be found to prevail very much in all Northern Piedmont. We found that our proposed guide was equally willing to act as porter, and discharge the humble duty of carrying our baggage on his back to Macugnaga, and we accordingly engaged him for that purpose, in order that we might have some opportunity of judging of what use he was likely to be to us. Later in the evening the landlord again made his appearance, and brought with him a small wooden bowl which contained some round soft balls of amalgam in which there was gold, and he then told us that he possessed a gold-mine near Macugnaga, and had a mill for grinding the ore at a short distance from the hotel, a little higher up

the valley. In talking of this subject all his ordinary listlessness disappeared, and he became animated: he told us that he had made an outlay of fifteen hundred pounds, but it had at present brought him no profitable return. Here then was the secret of the disorder which prevails in his establishment; his heart is in his gold-mine, all his thoughts centre there, and his wealth is thus drained from him, whilst his hotel, which, if properly conducted, would prove a true gold-mine, is left neglected and falls into disrepute.

Sept. 2.—It was a great disappointment to us when, on getting up this morning in full expectation of a glorious day in the Val Anzasca, we found the mountains covered with heavy clouds, while a steady rain was falling in the valley. There cannot be a greater trial of patience than to be caught by bad weather in the midst of fine scenery. There is an impatience to begin one's journey, and the hindrance caused by the rain produces the greatest uneasiness. It is almost impossible to settle down to reading, writing letters, or any other serious occupation. One's whole attention is occupied in gazing up at the sky, and speculating about a change of weather. It was thus that we employed ourselves until 11 A.M., when a break showed itself in the sky, the clouds began to disperse, and the rain ceased. It was noon before we could venture to start for Macugnaga. I had already once walked the distance, and determined to do so again, although the

journey was to be up the valley instead of down it. But I must frankly confess that I found the ascent more fatiguing, and the steamy closeness of the day made it rather trying. As we intended to return to Ponte Grande, we left there the greater part of our baggage locked up in a cupboard, and then having engaged "Young Greasy" (as one of my companions unfeelingly called him) as porter, to carry such things as we required for a couple of days, we started on our expedition. The poor fellow was not at all exorbitant in his demands, for 5½ francs completely satisfied him for the journey to Macugnaga, including the "retour." The only drawback was, that as he had fully made up his mind to conduct us, on our return, over the Baranca Pass, he was disposed to be more than ordinarily attentive, and would occasionally, when he wished to be particularly emphatic, place his large hot hand on the arm of one of the gentlemen, who was not at all disposed to appreciate the civility. Finding that my companions took great interest in the geological character of the country, he evidently inferred that they were on the look out for some gold-mining adventure; and there can be no doubt that if they had been, his services would have been most freely offered. As there are numerous gold-mines in the valley, people are always on the alert in that respect, and our friend Mr. L—'s geological hammer, which he generally carried in his hand and frequently made use of, was something

which excited the attention and perhaps the suspicion of the inhabitants of every valley that contains the precious metal. In the warmth of his enthusiasm, "Young Greasy" at last drew out of his pocket a piece of quartz studded with brilliant cubes of iron pyrites, which certainly present to the eye of the uninitiated a very attractive appearance, and he solemnly assured us that it was a specimen of gold, and in the most patronizing style pressed it on Mr. L—'s acceptance. The latter in vain endeavoured to convince him that he was quite in error; but "Young Greasy," who had made up his mind that he possessed a great treasure, or wished to make us believe so, was not disposed to be convinced. However, he was at last obliged, though very reluctantly, to submit to the superior knowledge of our geological friend.

An excellent carriage road has now been constructed between Ponte Grande and Vanzone; but although the latter ranks as the chief place in the Val Anzasca, it is a mere village, which has no hotel to be compared in size with that at Ponte Grande. The little inn is kept by one of the brothers Albasini, and many travellers describe it as a more eligible halting-place than Ponte Grande, on account of the cleanliness, civility, good cookery, and moderate charges to be met with there, and more especially by reason of the exquisite beauty of the scenery immediately around Vanzone, and the fine distant view of Monte Rosa. The existence of

Val Anzasca—the Morgen.

this inn is of great importance to travellers who intend to sleep on the way as they ascend the valley to Macugnaga; for they can drive the whole distance to Vanzone, and when they start the next morning for Macugnaga,

the walk will be a good deal shorter, and time and fatigue saved. The road is intended to be carried higher up the valley towards Pestarena, but the streets of Vanzone are so narrow, that not even a *char-à-banc* could pass through them, and therefore unless a great alteration is made there, it will be impossible for carriages to proceed higher up.

Before reaching Pestarena we had to ascend a remarkable and lofty barrier of rock called MORGEN, which appears to block up the Val Anzasca like a steep wall; but is beautifully wooded, and forms one of the most interesting objects in the day's journey. Previously to ascending this rocky barrier we crossed to the right bank of the Anza by a stone bridge, and then there followed a steep climb in order to reach the summit. Close by the foot of the ascent are some of the gold-mines of the district, but they are not now worked. The Anza, which here forms a complete cascade, comes tumbling down over the rocks in the most picturesque manner. The great heat of the day and the perfect stillness of the atmosphere made the ascent of this barrier of Morgen very toilsome. Three or four peasant women, with heavy burdens on their backs, were climbing up at the same time as ourselves, and were in the merriest mood. They were strong, healthy looking, neatly dressed women, without any trace of goître or crétinism, which are the scourge of some of the Italian valleys, but are seldom, if ever, to be seen

in the Val Anzasca or the neighbouring districts. On passing these cheerful creatures a few friendly greetings took place, and we then lost sight of them; but shortly afterwards, when we were sitting down to rest for a few minutes, they overtook us, to their great delight, and, guessing that I was tired, did their best to encourage me by crying "Coraggio!" Not long after that we again passed them when they were resting, and I gave them the same encouraging word, to their great amusement. Thus the labour of the ascent was lessened, and almost forgotten.

As we went upwards to Pestarena a discussion took place between my companions as to the structure of the rocks which compose this singular barrier of Morgen. It is described in Murray's Handbook as a spur of Monte Caccia;* but Mr. King appears to be of opinion that it is the huge moraine of some ancient glacier. There are certainly abundant traces of glacier action, and it is impossible to doubt their origin, although as the rocks are principally of mica schist, which is apt to peel off in flakes, the vestiges of their former condition are not of so permanent a character as those which are found on the more enduring surface of the rocks of the Grimsel. However, these marks do not quite prove that the huge barrier of Morgen is an ancient moraine, for the marks may have been made on

* 'Handbook for Switzerland,' 7th edition, p. 295.

the live rock itself, over which the glacier would force its way. But this question is one which I must leave to be determined by philosophers, contenting myself with the observation that the subject makes a capital topic for conversation during a long ascent upon a hot day. I was not sorry when we gained the summit and found ourselves amidst green meadows in the upper part of the valley. Here we discovered that we had already emerged from the noble forest trees of walnut and chestnut which had excited our admiration in the lower part of the valley, and were again surrounded by larch and fir-trees. It must be confessed, however, that this decided change was agreeable in some respects; for it was associated in our minds with ideas of a cooler and more refreshing atmosphere than that which had so lately oppressed us, and we beheld at a short distance the little village of Pestarena, where we had determined to rest and dine. Shortly before entering the village we saw a French gentleman busily engaged in making sketches of the scenery, and we stayed for a few minutes to chat with him. He appeared perfectly conversant with the neighbourhood, and spoke very highly of the good people who keep the little Albergo dei Minieri at Pestarena; he also informed us that a new inn called the Monte Moro had just been opened at Macugnaga, and advised us to go there, although the place was still in an unfinished state. "You will find," he said, "but an indifferent cuisine there; it

is best to dine at Pestarena or Borca, and sleep at Macugnaga." As Mr. King has spoken in very depreciatory terms of this little inn at Pestarena "with its grim exterior, and its interior group of smokers and drinkers," which he said "reminded one exactly of the Jolly Colliers,"* it is only just to say that our experience confirmed the recommendation of the French gentleman. On entering the Albergo we were shown up stairs to a tidy little room, and a very good dinner was shortly placed before us. Nothing could exceed the willingness of the host and hostess to show attention to their guests, or the moderation of the charges.

It was 3 P.M. when we reached Pestarena, and in about an hour and a half we again started on our journey, and after passing the little inn at Borca we reached Macugnaga at 5.15 P.M. Borca is rather a favourite place for English travellers to stop at, and it may be as well to mention that although the house is a very small and old one, the landlord, Alessandro Albasini, is reputed to have excellent skill in cookery, and to be a worthy and respectable man. He is also a renowned chamois hunter, and I have heard this inn highly spoken of by persons who have remained there several days. The objection to staying at Borca is, that Monte Rosa is not visible from it, and that the additional distance there and back, which has to be travelled on a visit to the Belvedere, constitutes an-

* P. 458.

other formidable drawback, especially if you have to walk. When persons stay in this valley the grand object of attraction is Monte Rosa, and as the village of Macugnaga commands a magnificent view of it, which

View of Monte Rosa—Val Anzasca.

Borca does not, the former must always be the place most convenient to travellers. It was a disappointment to us that Monte Rosa was hidden by clouds during the greater part of our walk to-day. We ought to

have had it in view right in front nearly the whole time. Nothing indeed can much surpass the beauty of the Val Anzasca with its luxuriant vegetation of all kinds,—fig-trees, trellised vines, noble walnut-trees, and splendid Spanish chestnuts, whose glossy leaves and fantastic branches are quite unlike those of the stunted specimens which grow within the bastion of Kensington Gardens; elegant and delicate ferns of great variety, and Alpine pastures and nooks everywhere full of exquisite wild flowers. Then the villages are always prettily placed, and their white-washed churches are adorned with picturesque campaniles. The Anza rushes over a rocky bed at the bottom of the valley, which mountains on each side close in, whilst now and then a cascade leaping down their precipitous sides gives additional animation to the scene. But the great feature of all is of course Monte Rosa, which, with its snow-topped head, towers aloft in the sky, to complete the picture. Before we reached Macugnaga the clouds had cleared away, and the view was perfect.

As we approached the village, Lochmatter in person came out to meet us, and was evidently desirous that we should go to his inn; but as our former experience of it was not highly favourable, we determined to try the new inn which the French gentleman had recommended. Lochmatter whispered a word or two to our porter, which no doubt made it to his interest to take us to Lochmatter's house, and he professed not to

know where the other inn was. This, however, was something not very difficult to discover, and one of my companions rapidly walked round the village, and soon came back, having discovered the way to the "Hôtel Mont Moro." This is situated not far from the new church, and a little out of the village, and it forms a very conspicuous object to persons descending the Monte Moro Pass. Some of the reception-rooms for travellers were not yet finished, and the staircases were without balustrades, but we found large airy bedrooms in the house, and everything, except the cuisine, was on a superior scale to what we had met with at Lochmatter's. I was contented to rest on our arrival, but my companions strolled out as far as the old Gothic church and limetree to enjoy the fine view of Monte Rosa, and watch the sun, which was just setting behind it.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BELVEDERE OF MACUGNAGA; THE BARANCA PASS; AND VAL MASTALONE.

Excursion to the Belvedere — The "lost valley" — Monte Rosa from the Belvedere — Solitude among the mountains — The Weiss Thor — The Glacier — Pedriolo — The Turlo Pass — The Val Quarazza — Photography in the Alps — Return to Ponte Grande — From Ponte Grande to Varallo — The nervous mule-driver — Banio — The Val Ollocia — The Baranca Pass — Sheep and shepherds of the Bergamesque — A thunder-shower — The Val Mastalone — The Inn at Fobello — Fréra — The drive to Varallo.

Sept. 5.—On our former visit to Macugnaga we hurried hastily away, as many English travellers have done before, without having visited the Belvedere; but we had thoroughly repented, and on this occasion our principal object in revisiting Macugnaga was to make that excursion. Fortunately the day was most favourable, and at an early hour I saw the first rays of the sun touch the mountain with rosy light. The summit of Monte Rosa was perfectly clear during the whole day, but a few mists clung to some of the lower mountains, particularly the Monte Moro. At about 8.30 A.M. we started from the hotel, our party being increased by the addition of an American gentleman and his Oberland guide. Young Gaspere Dominica, the landlord's son, one of the

most sprightly, active, and obliging fellows possible, officiated as our guide; and his brisk little dog went with him, frisking on in front of the party, and appearing perfectly at its ease during the whole expedition. Young Gaspere is the *factotum* of the hotel, and the only person in it who seems gifted with much intelligence; he has already enlarged the circle of his ideas by a visit to Turin, where he studies medicine during the winter months, with the intention of becoming a physician, or to speak more plainly a village doctor. We were extremely glad when we found that he was to accompany us on our excursion. With the greatest good will he took on his back one of the baskets of the country, well filled with provisions, and decorated by the projecting necks of two black wine-bottles; thus equipped he led the way. As my companions intended to make a complete circuit of the glacier, and I was to go no farther than the Belvedere, it was arranged that I should return to the inn by myself. I was commended to the care of Gaspere's father, who was to provide me with lunch on my return, and he was now introduced to me. Old Dominica is a very peculiar, dark-complexioned Italian, with a perfect mop of black hair standing straight out from his head in an entangled mass. His unshaven beard, and, I fear, unwashed face, added no charm to his personal appearance. When he was told that I should return before my companions, and that he must take care of me, he signified his assent

and pleasure by giving me a patronising tap on the shoulder, which required a great deal more courage to be received without shrinking, than I felt necessary to exert during the whole day's excursion.

The first part of our route lay across rich meadows, where the women were busily at work mowing the short grass, making it into hay, and then carrying it off on their heads tied up in bundles in large cloths. As the hay is made from pastures which contain more herbs than grass, it would be difficult to carry it in any other way without dropping a large quantity. It must be remembered that this is not a country for wheeled vehicles of any kind; and, in fact, there is neither horse, mule, nor even donkey at Macugnaga. The women appear to take their children out with them when they go to work in the fields; and I observed two little creatures, apparently about three or four years old, who were amusing themselves by climbing a grass-covered rock, and then rolling down its sloping side, having now and then a battle for its possession with a goat that was busily engaged in cropping the grass. An English mother would have been in a state of alarm, first at the possibility of an encounter with the goat, and next lest one of the children should fall and break a limb. When I looked at the amusement of these children, I thought to myself,—you are practising early, and will no doubt be in time first-rate mountaineers. On another occasion we heard cries proceeding from a

novel kind of cradle. The infant's mother had taken advantage of a long pole, placed horizontally, from which she had suspended a sheet; in this she had placed her baby on a pillow, and thus a primitive cradle was formed, which answered its purpose perfectly, for the child could neither fall out nor hurt itself. When the child cried, the mother rushed down the steep slope where she was at work and quieted it; then running up again, she resumed her scythe, and was soon mowing away faster than ever, as if to make up for lost time.

Notwithstanding the close proximity of immense ice-fields, the valley of Macugnaga produces a small quantity of grain; and we saw the young corn for the next year already two or three inches high. The deep snow which must cover it in winter no doubt preserves it from being killed by the severe frosts. The spot called the Belvedere is the summit of an enormous ancient moraine at the very foot of Monte Rosa, which separates into two limbs the great glacier of Macugnaga. The Belvedere, however, is not like ordinary moraines—a huge mass of loose earth and stones without vegetation, occasioning a complete disfigurement to the landscape—but as its origin must date back to remote ages, its surface has in course of time become clothed with a forest of firs and an abundance of grass and bilberries, so that it now presents the appearance of a beautiful, well-wooded hill.

On leaving Macugnaga we took the path on the left-hand side of the valley, and then began to ascend the moraine from that side. There is plenty of game to be found near the Belvedere, and also on most of the mountains which form the sides of the Val Anzasca; trout also are to be taken in the stream near the "Hôtel Mont Moro," and in the brook below the waterfall at Borca. Shortly after beginning the ascent, Gaspere called our attention to the celebrated spring which there comes welling up out of the turf in a bright and clear stream, called the Brunnen Pecetto. We were much amused at finding that Gaspere, notwithstanding his superior education and intelligence, was a devout believer in the legends attached to this well, which he had been taught when a child; and he gravely assured us that two hunters of the district had, about half a century ago, succeeded in reaching the famed "lost valley" by threading their way through the subterranean passage along which the water now flows, but which he said was then dry. They found a fertile valley filled with rich meadows and fine trees, and everything else fitted to delight the heart of an Alpine agriculturist. They returned to their native valley and related their adventures, but a sudden change took place in the glacier which stopped all further access through the subterranean passage, and a gushing stream now fills it. When we expressed our incredulity, Gaspere seemed much hurt, and assured us that the last survivor of the two hunters

had died in the village not much more than fifteen years ago, and that no one there doubted the truth of their assertion. De Saussure refers to a story of the same kind which was related to him, in an altered form, at Turin; and he appears to have taken great pains, when at Gressonay, to ascertain whether there was any foundation for the popular belief of a "lost valley," but he arrived, of course, at the conclusion that there was none.*

It took us about two hours after leaving the hotel to reach the Belvedere on foot. It was a bright hot day, and the latter part of the ascent was very rapid and fatiguing; but the whole distance may, I believe, be travelled on horseback. I expected to have found in the Belvedere a kind of summer-house built for the convenience of travellers, but whatever may be the case hereafter, nothing of the kind exists at present. It is merely the crest of the ancient moraine which immediately faces the precipices of Monte Rosa, and overlooks the glacier. This glacier descends from the flanks of Monte Rosa to a point below the Belvedere, which separates it into two great divisions, streaming down right and left. Possibly at one time the glacier rose higher than the Belvedere itself, and went stretching down into the valley of Macugnaga in the grand fanlike shape of the Glacier of the Rhone. At all events it has now retreated into vastly reduced

* 'Voyages dans les Alpes,' p. 310.

dimensions, and forms immediately below the Belvedere its present moraine, which is of the usual earthy, stony appearance.

When we reached the Belvedere, I felt some regret at having arrived at the point beyond which the fear of over fatigue would prevent my going farther, for my companions had determined to make the circuit of the glacier. As there is a well-defined path all the way from Macugnaga, it was not necessary that any guide should accompany me on my return, and I went back alone. Persons who suppose all Italy to be thronged with brigands may imagine that this involved a great exercise of courage. In truth, however, nothing but the greatest civility has ever been experienced by me from the people of this district, and the existence of highwaymen there is about as fabulous as that of the "lost valley." Before turning back I watched from the Belvedere the whole party start on their farther expedition across the north arm of the glacier to the châlets of Jazzi. Travellers generally rely on the 'Handbook' as an infallible source of information, and my companions therefore would not allow themselves to be persuaded for a long time, that the châlets of Jazzi are below the châlets of Filar, instead of above them, as described in Murray, and laid down in the map there given of the glacier;* but at last the positive assurances of the guide, and a reference to Schla-

* Seventh edition, p. 297.

gintweit's map, convinced them that the 'Handbook,' for this once, was wrong.

I felt disappointed when I found myself left "alone in my glory," instead of taking part in the excursion over the glacier, which, as I learned afterwards, was by no means the formidable undertaking that had been represented. It was clear that the guides themselves were very imperfectly acquainted with the glacier, and were alarmed at unknown dangers, which might possibly be met with, rather than at any which really existed. Few travellers make this excursion; and as the glacier changes every year, the guides always feel a certain amount of apprehension unless they have recently traversed it, and the occasions when they do so are by no means frequent.

When my companions had gone I took a leisurely survey of the unrivalled and majestic scene which surrounded me, but it would be easier to describe the emotions excited by it than to do justice to the scene itself. Monte Rosa, whose stupendous precipices here form a perfect wall of rocks, entirely closes in, by its vast breadth and height, the upper end of the valley. The view is remarkable more for enormous crags, of towering height, with snow resting on the ledges only, than for any long sweep of glaciers. There are few other points close to Monte Rosa from which its principal peaks, or rather the points of its coronet, are so distinctly visible. On the left of the great mass forming Monte Rosa proper,

is a lofty peak which is called the Signal Kuppe from having been the one principally used for trigonometrical observations; then, proceeding towards the right hand, comes the Zumstein Spitze; and next comes the highest peak of all (Höchste Spitze), which, in consequence of receding to the back-ground, appears from the Belvedere to be positively lower than either the Signal Kuppe or the Nord End. The latter is the elevated peak on the right hand. Mr. George Barnard, when he made the beautiful sketch from which the frontispiece to this book is taken, was not content to remain on that part of the Belvedere to which travellers are usually conducted, but clambered to a point on the moraine a little below it, and this gave him a more extensive view to the left hand, embracing the peaks to the south of the Signal Kuppe, at the very foot of which is the Alp of Pedriolo. (*See frontispiece.*)

Any traveller who like myself has been left perfectly alone in this wonderful place, will understand by experience what solitude really is, and how eloquently its deep and unbroken silence speaks to the heart. I know no spot where Von Tschudi's fine description of the aspect of the mountain-world to the eye of the traveller strikes more powerfully upon the mind by its force and truth:—

"Around, in savage majesty, stand icy peaks and galleries of rock never trodden by human foot, scarcely even by that of the chamois; as yet unexplored by the researches of science, perhaps not even

gifted with a name." . . . "They slumber on for their thousands of years, dreaming, it may be, of the ocean waves which once dashed against them, of the colossal fire which upheaved them from their mother-earth, of the variegated shells and fish which sported on their peaks and in their clefts; then, how the water slowly ebbed away; how the luxuriant shrubs and palms of the south waved freshly over their summits; how next their slopes were clothed with the chestnut and the lime; and how, finally, all life sank down gradually into the valleys, the storms swept off their coating of soil, their winters lengthened and their summers shortened; how the snow, once an element unknown to them, first became stationary on their surface, and then towered up in lofty masses, till snow and ice, and gloom and storm, became fixed features of the realm. Perhaps in their inmost recesses may be traced the ruins of a yet more beauteous primeval state, veins of precious gold running deep within the bosom of the rocks, and beds of crystal, and nests of glittering gems. But to the outward eye they are dreary, lifeless masses, and each succeeding century buries them more deeply beneath their load of snow and ice, and crumbles away their naked ribs." *

Farther to the right, and looking like a small notch in the snow, is the old Weiss Thor, which is said to have been formerly used as a pass to Zermatt, but has now, for many years, been abandoned, for it presents more dangers than reasonable persons are willing to encounter. The new Weiss Thor, which has superseded it, is on the other or northern side of the Cima di Jazzi; this is a much less formidable undertaking, and has been accomplished at least by one lady. To the right of the old Weiss Thor, but at a considerable distance from it, is the snowy summit of the Cima di Jazzi, the ascent of which forms a favourite excursion

* 'Sketches of Nature in the Alps,' p. 36.

from Zermatt. The pass of the Weiss Thor is, however, not to be recommended as a feat for ladies. I have known even gentlemen fail when attempting it from Macugnaga at a time when the snow was unfavourable. As the Weiss Thor is one of the most celebrated passes round Monte Rosa, and no account of it, that I recollect, appears in any work except the brief note in Murray's 'Handbook,'* I have obtained from a gentleman, who crossed the Pass in the autumn of 1858, an extract from his journal, which contains so interesting a narrative of the expedition that it is, with his kind permission, inserted in an Appendix.†

Having thoroughly enjoyed this sublime scene for about an hour, I began to retrace my steps to Macugnaga. I had, on the way, a perfect feast of bilberries, which grow here in remarkable profusion. Presently I found a large anthill, and, by way of contrast to the gigantic objects which had so lately engaged my attention, I stopped to examine the living swarms of little industrious creatures which proceeded from it. I crumbled some bread which the ants immediately took possession of, clustering over the larger pieces and biting off little bits, which they dragged down into their numerous holes; the more manageable pieces were lifted up, and still more rapidly disappeared. I could not observe that even a single ant stayed to eat some, but it struck me as curious that all

* P. 305, 7th edit. † See Appendix, No. I.

at once adopted bread as suited for their food, though they could never have seen or tasted any before.

I had not the least difficulty in finding my way back, but I was once or twice strongly inclined to wander from the beaten path. I resisted the temptation, however, knowing that should I lose my way the consequences might prove serious. When I reached the hotel I found that two English gentlemen who had crossed the Moro this morning had just arrived, and were in a state of very natural impatience respecting their dinner. Dominica was anxious that they should wait until 6 o'clock, when we had ordered dinner, so that all his guests might dine at the same time; and the Englishmen, who were unable to speak German or Italian, were in despair when they found that their host could not understand French, and was not willing to comprehend their wishes. At this critical moment I arrived to extricate my famished countrymen from their dilemma, and give orders that their dinner should be immediately served.

At 6 P.M. my friends arrived from the glacier in a state of intense excitement, after a most successful expedition; they had expected great difficulties, but experienced none. After reaching the Châlets of Jazzi, they had climbed the rocks which border the glacier until they reached the Châlets of Filar. Here they proposed to cross the glacier to the southern side, to a point above Pedriolo; but the guides, who were

evidently uneasy, persuaded them to take the shorter and easier course of crossing the glacier to a point just below that place. They did so, and then ascended above the Châlets of Pedriolo, and walked along the top of the ridge of the steep moraine there. Mr. L— again descended on the glacier, and collected some interesting geological specimens among the rocks which had fallen from the heights above. He brought back with him some beautiful specimens of rock quartz. My friends then returned to Pedriolo to lunch, and they purchased a couple of marmots from a chasseur who resides there.

I could see the position of Pedriolo and distinguish its meadows very well from the Belvedere through the glass. It is a place which must always be interesting from the circumstance that De Saussure encamped and passed the night there previously to ascending the Pizzo Bianco.

"We passed," said he, "the night there, under our tents, in a spot truly delicious. We were encamped in a meadow, which was carpeted with turf, hemmed in with the lofty Alps, and enamelled with the most beautiful flowers; these meadows were bounded by the glaciers and rocks of Monte Rosa, whose lofty pinnacles were magnificently cut in sharp relief against the azure vault of heaven. Near our tents flowed a rivulet of the freshest and purest water. On the other side was a hollow rock, under the shelter of which we burnt rhododendrons, the only wood which grows at this elevation; and the fire thus made served to cook our soup and protect us against the sharp coldness of the evening." *

* De Saussure, 'Voyage Pittoresque,' p. 295.

De Saussure's description is still accurate, and nothing could be more primitive than the condition of the people who pasture their cattle on the green meadows which he has described. My companions obtained there some excellent butter, but when they asked for a cup or a glass, nothing of the kind was to be had. A wooden bowl and wooden spoon, being all that the good people had, were freely offered.

The descent from Pedriolo to Macugnaga is on the base of the Pizzo Bianco, which is separated by a deep ravine and one limb of the glacier from the Belvedere. The walk down from Pedriolo was described to me as being excessively steep, and with so many loose stones to increase the difficulty of the walk, that I was congratulated on not having formed one of the party. It required a good day's exercise on the mountains to make one relish the viands which had been cooked by Dominica's own hands in a style of primitive simplicity, and we certainly should have fared better in that respect if we had been at Lochmatter's.

Sept. 4.—Having now seen the principal attractions of Macugnaga, we returned to Ponte Grande, in order to cross by the Baranca Pass into the Val Sesia. The head of that valley may, without the necessity of returning to Ponte Grande, be reached by ascending the Val Quarazza opposite Borca. This Val leads to the foot of the Turlo Pass, by which travellers may easily go to Alagna. But although Alagna was one of the

places to which we were bound, we could not persuade ourselves to make the Turlo our route, in consequence of the unfavourable description which Professor Forbes has given of it. He pronounces it to be one of the most tedious passes in the Alps, although it presents no difficulty. But it must be remembered, that in crossing this pass he went from Alagna to Borca, thus turning his back during the first part of the journey upon all that is grand and glorious. There is no doubt that the pass must be a tedious one, as the huge mass of the Pizzo Bianco intercepts, during great part of the way, all view of Monte Rosa, and the Val Quarazza does not appear to possess any characteristic beauties of its own. But we were assured by one traveller, who, after leaving Borca, and toiling along the Val Quarazza, reached, by a great expenditure of strength and patience, the summit of the Turlo, that there is one point near a small lake, where the path begins to lead down into the Val Sesia, at which a most magnificent view is obtained of Monte Rosa. It would, however, be better to visit this spot by making the shorter but steeper ascent from Alagna, and then returning. The scenery about Borca is very interesting, and the view, as you look up the entrance of the Val Quarazza, offers such an enchanting appearance as to make it difficult to believe that the journey through it can be tedious.

It was a most beautiful morning, and when we arrived

at Borca, we observed in a green meadow, a little lower down than the inn, the camera of a photographer placed on its tripod, and directed towards the Val Quarazza. A few paces from it there was a tent pitched, and our curiosity was of course sufficiently excited to induce us to make closer inspection. We found that the camera belonged to a military gentleman, whose absence of about ten years from England seems only to have increased the pleasure which he has in the society of his own countrymen. With the greatest politeness he exhibited some of the views he had taken in the beautiful Val Anzasca; and to his kindness I am indebted for three interesting views which appear as woodcuts in this book.* When we first approached the tent the Colonel had not yet emerged from it, but was busily engaged in fixing a view he had just taken, and until this was done he could not allow a ray of light to enter. His wife stood at the door of the tent, and explained to us in a few words the state of affairs, and an amusing conversation then went on for some time between the invisible Colonel in the tent and my merry companions without. I am afraid that our visit did not improve the photograph, for on the Colonel at last making his appearance with it in his hand, he pronounced it to be a failure. He complained much of the difficulty which he had in getting

* The Morgen; View of Monte Rosa, Val Anzasca; and the Lago d'Orta.

anywhere in that country a fresh supply of photographic materials, and his stock of glasses was nearly exhausted. The apparatus is of course very heavy, and requires a mule to carry it; but any one who knows how to use it skilfully, and select with artistic eye the proper points of view, would find it a most delightful companion, and speedily become very popular among his friends. After investigating all the specimens which the Colonel had with him, we sat down on the grass and had an amusing gossip on a variety of topics, and it was with a feeling of regret that we were obliged at last to take our leave and proceed on our journey.

Although the morning was bright, the afternoon became so cloudy, that Monte Rosa ceased to be visible before noon. It was of course much less fatiguing to walk down than up the valley; and there was no occasion for any one to cry "Coraggio!" as we descended the barrier of Morgen. The Alpine agriculturists do not appear to coincide with their brethren in England in regarding the ash tree with aversion, or in endeavouring to extirpate it like a weed, but encourage its growth and turn it everywhere to a profitable account by stripping off the leaves and using them as fodder for cattle. The gathering of the ash leaves seems, at this season, to be one of the principal employments of the women, and three or four of them may sometimes be seen perched on the branches of a single tree, picking off every leaf with as much care as the Chinese would

bestow on a tea plant. These leaves are then spread out to dry like hay, and are afterwards carried away in large bundles, whilst the poor trees which have been subjected to this operation present, with their bare boughs, the most disconsolate and forlorn appearance. We also saw some of these active female climbers gathering walnuts with equal assiduity, and if our guide said anything saucy to them, they would pelt him from their elevated position. Although the district abounds with walnuts, we never had any of them served at table, and it was very uncommon to see fresh walnuts exposed for sale. I believe they are principally collected for making oil. The walnut seems almost as useful to the inhabitants of the Alpine valleys, as the olive is to the dwellers on the Italian plains.

Directly we arrived at Ponte Grande, we began to make our arrangements for the following day, and the first point to be accomplished was to hire a mule to take me to the top of the Baranca Pass. Fortunately side saddles are kept at Ponte Grande; there was therefore no difficulty in that respect, and mules are plentiful. As we found that the landlord knew nothing about the matter, we did not choose to confide the arrangement of our expedition to him. A new and handsome stone bridge is being built across the Anza, of still larger dimensions than that lately swept away by the winter torrents, which from the importance of its size gave its name to the place. My companions observing

some intelligent-looking gentlemen who were superintending the erection of the bridge, spoke to them, and asked their advice about crossing the pass. They had lately been over it themselves, and obligingly gave every information: my friends were introduced by them to the postmaster, whose establishment is just opposite the door of the hotel, and he engaged to provide a good mule for me on the following day. His son, a little boy about twelve years old, showed so much quickness during the conversation which followed, that he was invited by Mr. L— to accompany our party as a miniature guide, and both he and his father were extremely flattered by the proposal. In the evening Mr. L— and H— crossed the bridge and strolled as far as Banio, in order to reconnoitre the Val Ollocia, through which our course was to be taken on the morrow. They came back highly delighted with what they had seen. In the evening we had a long conversation on geological subjects; we had been gradually collecting specimens of some of the most interesting rocks, carefully noting down the places from which they were obtained. We met at the hotel with a most intelligent Italian gentleman, Signor Enrico Garaban, the director of the mines de' Cani, near Vanzone. He spoke English with great fluency, had been in England, and knew several of our most distinguished geologists. By his assistance our friend Mr. L— was able to verify the names of any of his specimens about which he enter-

tained a doubt, and did not fail to avail himself of so favourable an opportunity.

Sept. 5.—We left Ponte Grande at 7 A.M., intending if possible to reach Varallo. This may be done in one long day, although, owing to bad weather and the little assistance I received from my mule, we did not accomplish it in that time. The mule was a very good one, and I should suppose that the man who accompanied it must have been the owner,—judging from the extreme care which he took of it during the journey, and the very little attention which he paid to the rider. He led the mule by the bridle, scarcely ever venturing to let it go; and his excessive nervousness showed that he evidently considered himself engaged upon a very arduous, if not dangerous, undertaking. Neither the mule nor his master had ever, to my belief, had any previous experience of the pass, and the fears with which the good man was impressed had no other basis than the imagination, for there was no real difficulty during any part of the way. I believe that a good mule in this part of the country costs about 30*l.*, and it therefore forms an important article of property to a poor man. The owner was not at all disposed that the mule should incur any risk for me, and he guided it in a manner often so regardless of my comfort, that my feet sometimes grazed the wall of the narrow pathway, and more than once my head received a slight knock against the projecting beam of a house without his

seeming to be conscious of or caring about it: so long as his mule had a good path to walk on, he regarded nothing else.

The Post-master's little son was equipped for the journey long before we started. He was to receive three francs for this his first inauguration as guide; and his novel position filled him with importance and delight. Indeed he was in such spirits, and so full of fun, that he could not look at me without bursting into a laugh. As we crossed the temporary wooden structure which at present serves for the bridge, we saw a group which we inferred to be the boy's mother and sisters watching our progress with the greatest interest. The road up to Banio is excellent, and practicable for carriages, though steep. The Val Ollocia is exceedingly beautiful and richly wooded. On the other side of the ravine is the village of Anzino, perched on a lofty eminence immediately opposite Banio. The position of these two places at a great height and so near each other, but yet separated by a deep gulf which would make the journey between them one of considerable labour, has a most striking appearance. One of my companions suggested that in time of war they might cannonade one another with great facility.

There are several churches in Banio. Two of them are in a large square, principally composed of dwellings for priests and officials, but there is little else of interest in the place, which is nothing more than a village. The

Val Ollocia is generally well cultivated, and we passed many little scattered hamlets, threading our way beneath beautiful chestnut groves, at a great height above the stream which flows along the bottom of the valley. We had two porters to carry our baggage and guide us on our way,—one of them was "Young Greasy" himself,—but they appeared to know nearly as little about the pass as the man who led my mule. They had frequent disputes as to which was the right path, particularly after we had crossed the summit of the pass, and were in a country still less known to them. But our young guide, who had been over the pass oftener than any of them, always intervened in these discussions, maintaining bravely his own opinion, which generally turned out to be right. After we had proceeded up the valley for about two hours and a-half we came to a wooden bridge which crosses the stream, and on the other side of which begins the steep ascent which leads to the "col." Here, to my great surprise, I was informed that the mule could go no farther, and that I must proceed the rest of the way on foot. We remonstrated in vain, for they all solemnly assured us that it was utterly impracticable for a mule to ascend higher. It is true that the mule could not have gone over the wooden bridge, but there was a ford a little lower down, and there was therefore no difficulty in crossing the stream, and we afterwards found that there was a very well-defined

and good mule-path, up which I could have ridden to the very summit. However, as we had no positive knowledge to the contrary, we were obliged to give credit to the representations made to us, and therefore, though with a strong misgiving as to the truth of the man's story, we allowed him to return with his mule. He certainly had earned his eight francs very easily, and seemed to take his departure with great satisfaction. The porters requested that they might be allowed to stop for an hour at the bridge, to rest and refresh themselves before they began the ascent. They were well punished for having assisted the muleteer in his deception, for they had to carry an additional weight of cloaks and geological specimens, which had been strapped to my saddle; and when they afterwards showed a disposition to complain of the weight being too much for so steep a place, it was some satisfaction to be able to remind them that they had themselves to thank for it, and this always silenced them. It was undoubtedly a steep climb up, and as the weather was very hot, I found it fatiguing. The path during the greater part of the ascent forms a zigzag through a perfect thicket of trees and brushwood, which affords some protection from the rays of the sun. We kept the path to the left. That on the right hand leads to the Col d'Egua, and is, I believe, nearly impracticable for mules, though Mrs. King succeeded in crossing it with one.

It was about 12.15 P.M. when we reached the top of the Baranca Pass. Shortly before we arrived there, all wood had disappeared, and we found a large tract of grass-land, on which were two or three shepherds with a flock of sheep and some goats. They had with them a mule saddled and bridled, which I immediately pointed out to our porters as confirming what we had before urged about there being no difficulty in a mule crossing the pass. They looked rather confused at this practical refutation of their assertions. The sheep were of the Bergamesque kind, of which Von Tschudi gives so interesting an account.* They are quite a peculiar species, of unusual size, with long pendent ears, and high arched noses, and have a kind of flap hanging from the chin to the breast. They have long legs, and carry their heads erect. During the summer they are driven great distances to find subsistence among the mountains of Northern Italy. The Bergamesque sheep have the reputation of being a most sedate and even melancholy race, and it is said that the very lambs never frisk or gambol like the young of other sheep. Those we now saw refused all my advances to make friends with them, but the goats, after examining me with great curiosity, took some bread from my hand with so much eagerness, that the grim old shepherd smiled and said a few words to us. These shepherds are as remarkable as the sheep which they tend.

* P. 178.

They come principally from the Vals Seriana and Brembana, in the Bergamesque, and wander about with their sheep from place to place, leading a kind of nomadic life, and paying to each commune which they visit a tax called passage money for the pasturage of their flocks. They generally pass the winter in the Tessin, from which circumstance they are frequently called "Tessini." They are most picturesque-looking men, with broad-brimmed hats, shading dark features and keen eyes, and with large light-coloured mantles thrown over their shoulders, in a style which reminded me of the Spanish peasantry in the Pyrenees. We walked over the smooth pastures at the top of the pass for some distance, our porters pointing out on the right hand the pathway to the pass over the Col d'Egua, which leads down to Carcofaro. On our way we passed a tiny chapel, not big enough to be entered. Before this there were several peasants kneeling at their devotions, but the appearance of strangers attracted their attention, and they kept their eyes fixed upon us, turning their heads so as not to lose sight of us till we had quite passed by, their lips all the time moving rapidly as they continued to mutter their prayers.

It was very hot even at the top of the pass. The clouds, which had been collecting for some time, now disappointed us of the fine view we had expected to enjoy from this high spot. We lunched, and rested for about

three quarters of an hour, but the clouds had rather increased than diminished, when at 1 P.M. we began to descend. On crossing the summit we entered upon scenery of a totally different character to that which we had so lately left in the Val Ollocia. Nothing met our eyes but bare steep mountain sides without vegetation, forming deep ravines covered with huge loose stones. The rocks were of greenstone, with a good deal of hornblende. There is also a small quantity of dolomite, of which we found some specimens in the bed of a stream near the top, but none *in situ*. We were descending in high spirits, and making numerous geological explorations by the way, when suddenly some large drops of rain fell, and quickly put an end to our philosophical employment. We ran down the mountain as fast as we could to overtake the porters, who were walking on before with all the macintoshes and cloaks. Just as we reached the rushing stream at the bottom, which has there to be crossed by stepping along a series of vast blocks of stone, which afford so insecure a footing as to be embarrassing to a lady at any time, down came the rain, in a pelting thunder-shower. As every moment is of importance in such an emergency, I was glad to snatch my macintosh, which was just then handed to me, and wrap it hurriedly round me as I best could, whilst poised on a stone in the middle of the stream. However, I got safely over, without slipping into the water. The rain poured down heavily,

and we hastened to a châlet which was fortunately in sight, where we remained for nearly an hour till the shower was over. I took refuge in the hayloft, and spread out my dripping shawl and macintosh to dry. As I sat resting upon the sweet-smelling hay, a girl came and smilingly invited me to go down to the fire to dry and warm myself, but I preferred remaining where I was, knowing that there was more likelihood of taking cold if I went into a close, hot chamber. She wore the costume which we afterwards found to be general with the women of the Val Mastalone, consisting of a white chemisette and sleeves, with a woollen bodice and short dress, dark blue in front and light blue behind, and finished off with a broad red hem, below which are displayed dark blue trowsers of the same material as the dress. This costume, though singular, is both picturesque and becoming. They are a remarkably fine race of women, and my companions made frequent remarks on their handsome faces. Men are rarely seen in this Val, for they go away to act as waiters, or to fill similar situations, in places where they can earn good wages, and when they have saved a little money, return to settle in their native valleys.

The rain having abated, we were, after more than an hour's delay, enabled to walk down the valley to Fobello, going along a narrow path, which, after passing over slippery slabs of rock, winds through the steeply-sloping pastures. These grassy slopes retain the moisture very

much: my dress in consequence became so saturated and heavy that I quite understood why the costume described above should have been adopted in this valley, even were there no ash and walnut trees to be climbed. It was 4.30 P.M. when we reached Fobello, and we had some time previously again entered amidst the rich and luxuriant vegetation of an Italian valley. We could not see very far around us, on account of the masses of vapour which covered the hills, but we perceived on our left hand two buildings for the reception of travellers. The taller one appeared to be a kind of café, with billiard-rooms; the smaller was a comfortable inn. We had engaged our porters to carry our luggage to Fréra (or Ferrera), which is about an hour's walk beyond Fobello, and there is a char-road from Fréra to Varallo, by which we had hoped to be able to reach the latter place in the evening by taking a carriage; but we were now told, and (as we afterwards found) with perfect accuracy, that there was nothing at Fréra but a miserable *cabaret*, unprovided with any vehicle, and that if a carriage were wanted it must be ordered from Varallo. While we were listening to these explanations, and debating whether we should go on to Fréra and take our chance, the rain recommenced with great violence, and we were glad to make a speedy rush into the inn. We found that although it was a very small place, it afforded by no means bad quarters. Fobello appears to be in great repute as a place of

resort for holiday excursionists from Varallo, and it seems to be to that town what Richmond is to London. Unfortunately for us, some visitors from Varallo had already engaged the best bedrooms; but the landlord was remarkably civil and obliging, and did all he could to make us comfortable. He sent off a messenger to Varallo to order a carriage to meet us the next day at Fréra, and he then set to work to provide us with a dinner that should do credit to his house. But here we had to experience one inconvenience which travellers must occasionally be prepared to encounter. The inn has but one *salle-à-manger* for the use of all comers; and before our dinner was served, our porters ("Old Greasy" and "Young Greasy," as one of my companions insisted on calling them) had theirs supplied at an adjoining table. As they were a very free-and-easy set of fellows, and in high glee at having done their day's work, they put no restraint on their flow of spirits, and expressed their satisfaction over their good dinner with rather noisy hilarity. When they had finished, and our dinner was about to be served, they produced their pipes; but on a slight intimation being given them by Mr. L—, that smoking would not just then be agreeable to us, they civilly withdrew to a sheltered bench in the court-yard, and we were troubled no more by them. Our landlord then bustled about with great animation, and in a few minutes placed before us, to our surprise, a delicious little dinner that would have done

credit to many an establishment of greater pretensions. Our last course was a dish of roast partridges. There are plenty of black-cock in the neighbouring woods, and there was a splendid stuffed specimen under a glass case in the room, but the landlord had none in the larder. The rain continued to pour all night. Our porters determined, however, to return at an early hour in the morning, whatever might be the state of the weather; and they were extremely pleased when we paid them for their services and wished them a good journey. The boy's eyes sparkled with delight when he received what was perhaps the first half-crown he had ever earned.

From my experience of the Baranca Pass, I should say that a mule can cross it without much difficulty, and can be ridden up to the summit; but it would be necessary that the rider should alight there and walk down for an hour, or an hour and a half, on either side of the pass. The mule could then be mounted again, and the rest of the journey be performed in the saddle.

Sept. 6.—Although the morning was heavy with clouds, we were able to discover that the position of Fobello is most beautiful. It is surrounded by well-wooded, round-topped hills of moderate height, in which game is said to abound. The streams are well stocked with fine trout, and the place is quite a fairy scene of rural loveliness. The environs of Varallo are all charming, but the Val Mastalone is especially so, and it may well be a favourite

resort of the people of that town. I would strongly advise all who visit Varallo, but do not choose to encounter the fatigue of the Baranca Pass, to make an excursion up this lovely valley at least as far as Fobello. It is a delightful drive from Varallo to Fréra, where the carriage can be left while the travellers walk on to Fobello, and dine there and explore the place. They can afterwards return to Fréra, regain their carriage, and then drive back to Varallo; but this would no doubt take a long day, and it would be necessary to start very early. An excursion from Fobello to the Col di Campello, which is in the immediate neighbourhood, would, I believe, amply repay any one who could find time to make it. Mr. King has given a most interesting description of the view from this Col.*

At about 9 A.M. we walked down the valley to Fréra, following the path which leads along the left bank of the stream. A single porter, to our great surprise, carried all our baggage, and only asked two francs for his labour. We remonstrated, lest the poor fellow should be overburdened with too great a weight, but he and the landlord both insisted that he could carry the whole with ease. The stream which flows down the Val Mastalone is one of the most exquisitely beautiful in the world. Its waters are not of that brown, peat-dyed colour observable in the burns of Scotland, nor has it the grey chalky hue which characterises most of the glacier-fed

* 'The Italian Valleys,' &c., page 481.

torrents of Switzerland. Even the bright crystal water of an English trout-stream cannot vie with that of the Mastalone. Its prevailing tint is an intense cerulean blue, of the most brilliant transparency; and after tumbling and dashing, with a crest of white foam, over its rocky bed, it occasionally forms, beneath some beetling crag, smooth broad pools of the deepest hue and lustre. In such spots the eye feels itself under an indescribable fascination, and is reluctant to withdraw its gaze. It was impossible to refrain from repeated expressions of delight, and we all exclaimed what a delicious bath one of the pools would make. Everything around partakes of the same prevailing character of soft and gentle beauty. The crags are covered with hanging woods, the delicately-scented cyclamen and other exquisite wild flowers are found in profusion by the road-side, and the whole scene is one of perfect loveliness. For the first time I found growing wild the Lycopodium, which we cultivate under our glasses with ferns, and which forms such pretty borders at the Crystal Palace. Those who do not care for the sterner grandeur of Alpine mountains would be delighted here. It reminded me, in some slight measure, of the scenery at Matlock, but it is in every respect more beautiful as well as on a grander scale.

It was a great disappointment to us when, as we approached Fréra, the rain again began to fall, and we were driven to take shelter under a projecting rock

which had been blasted to form the road. Our porter had gone on before, and as the village was not in sight, we could not tell whether it was near or distant; we therefore remained ensconced in our sheltered nook for more than an hour, when our porter came back to look for us, bringing with him a bundle of enormous umbrellas of varied shades of bright green, red, and yellow. With the protection which these afforded us we reached Fréra, which consists only of a few houses, and gladly took shelter in the little "albergo." A small open carriage with a hood, which had been sent from Varallo, was waiting outside for us, but the horse had been put up. We stayed for three hours in this wretched inn, hoping that the rain would cease, and thus had ample leisure to observe the different employments in which the people of the house were engaged. In the kitchen there hung over the fire a large iron kettle in which some preparation was boiling; a tub was placed near, full of hot liquid which was at intervals poured into it from the kettle, and from the tub was strained off a bleaching liquid, used to whiten linen. The landlady, who superintended these operations, was a tall elderly woman with gold earrings; her finely-formed features showed that she must once have been handsome. Having satisfied our curiosity in this respect, and not wishing to be made warmer by the kitchen fire, we retired into a small adjoining room which proved to be the larder. On the walls hung a few round flat loaves of the brown

rye bread which is the principal food of the peasantry, and which sometimes requires to be cut with a hatchet. A cake of rather finer bread, stuck over with pieces of pear, and a sack of flour or Indian meal, constituted the rest of the provisions. A few wooden bowls and spoons were on a shelf, but we saw no crockery. When the landlady's dinner-hour came, she took the cake and poured some broth over it, and this formed her meal. As these must have been our quarters on the preceding evening, had we not stopped at Fobello, we examined everything with increased attention, and congratulated ourselves on the shower of rain that had stayed the further progress of our yesterday's journey. The good woman unlocked her best bedroom in order that we might see the advantages of the establishment, and it was really a much tidier place than one would have expected to find. What we liked best was the view from the open door of the larder where we sat, which looked upon a bit of green luxuriant-looking garden, every leaf in which seemed to be drinking in the refreshing rain. Beneath this hanging garden rushed the beautiful Mastalone. At last, about 3 P.M., our patience being fairly exhausted, we ordered out the horse, and started in the rain. The carriage was so small that we felt some doubt whether it could carry us all three, with our baggage, even though one of the gentlemen sat with the driver in front. We therefore thought it would be better to let our porter carry the

baggage to Varallo, which he was very eager to do for a mere trifle; and we contrived to cover it over with macintoshes, so that it should be kept dry. He started about an hour before us. There were some women also going to Varallo, who were his acquaintances, and one offered to assist him by carrying our alpenstocks, and seemed highly gratified when intrusted with them. When these arrangements were made, Mr. L— started on foot, determined to walk as far down the valley as he could, in spite of the rain; and he made such rapid progress that it was a long time before we overtook him with the carriage. We were quite confident, however, that he could not have missed his way, for the road, which is an excellent one, is in a deep gorge, bounded by rocks on one side, and by the blue rushing stream on the other, where it is protected by a parapet. Mr. L— seemed quite sorry when the carriage came up with him, and he was to walk no farther; for the rain was beginning to cease. Shortly afterwards we overtook the porter; and then finding that we could really pack our effects on the carriage, we relieved him of his load, thinking that it would be well to have a change of dress as soon as we arrived at Varallo. About half a mile farther on we saw the women trudging along, one of whom was carrying the alpenstocks. We pulled up and offered to take them from her, but to our great amusement she was not at all inclined to part with them. The good woman evidently considered that she was doing a kind action, and

was not disposed to have it brought to a premature end, so we humoured the old body by letting her keep them; and we certainly expected that when she had carried them to the inn at Varallo she would have asked for some gratuity, but in this we were quite mistaken, for she left them there without even asking to see us—thus showing that the maxim, "Point d'argent point de Suisse," is not applicable to the peasantry of Piedmont. Varallo is supplied with two good inns. We took up our quarters on this occasion at the Hôtel de la Poste, which, although perhaps not so well managed as the Hôtel d'Italie, has the advantage of looking over the Sesia.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAKE OF ORTA; MONTE MAZZUCCONE; AND CAMASCO.

Varallo — The Monte dei Tre Croci — View from its summit — Another visit to the Lake of Orta — The Col de Colma — Orta — The Hotel San Giulio — Evening on the Lake — The boatmen — The fair at Omegna — Our juvenile guide to Camasco — Quarna — A pic-nic at the foot of the Monte Mazzuccone — View from the summit of Monte Mazzuccone — The valley of Camasco — Charcoal-burners.— Camasco — The return to Varallo — The Princess Mathilde.

Sept. 7.—It was a wet night, and the rain still continued to pour in torrents this morning, nor did it leave off till about 1 P.M., when the clouds dispersed, the sun shone brightly, and we had a brilliant afternoon. We employed ourselves during the morning in writing letters, arranging specimens of wild flowers, and watching out of the window a poor tame marmot in a cage in the court-yard below. When the weather cleared up we first rambled through the town, and then visited the Sacro Monte, which I have already described.* After having examined the various chapels, we observed that on an adjacent hill at a short distance there were three crosses erected, from which we inferred that the place would command a view worth seeing, and this proved to be the case. Indeed all who visit the Sacro Monte

* Ante, p. 126.

will do well if they extend their walk to the Monte dei Tre Croci. The chapels on the Sacro Monte are enclosed by a wall, and a steep paved path leads up from Varallo to this enclosure. At the top of this, before entering the enclosure, another path to the left leads up through shady woods to the Monte dei Tre Croci. However, as the idea of ascending this hill only occurred to us just as we were about to leave the Sacro Monte, I felt that there would not be time for me to attempt the ascent, for it would require faster walking than I should like to reach the summit in an hour.... I therefore left the gentlemen to go alone. They got back to Varallo at 7 P.M., highly gratified at the success they had met with, for the view had far transcended their expectations. Monte Rosa is not visible from the Sacro Monte, but my companions found that there is a splendid view of it from the Tre Croci, which quite repaid them for the fatigue they underwent in climbing the very steep and stony path which leads to the summit. I regretted not having gone there, instead of spending my time among the chapels, which I had seen before; for there was not a cloud on the horizon, and the view, as described to me, not only commanded Monte Rosa and the Lyskamm, but extended up the Val Sesia and over range after range of mountains, until, turning towards the south, the eye finally rested on the plains of Piedmont, through which, at an immense distance, a river (believed to be the Doire, or Dora Baltea)

could be discerned, glowing like a thread of gold in the rich rays of the setting sun. A deep-tinted purple overspread the landscape, composed for the most part of variously shaped and strangely jagged mountains of granite, rising abruptly into the sky. A bright ruddy light sparkled on the sides of some of the distant mountains, as if reflected from panes of glass. My companions might well be proud of having been sufficiently enterprising to discover this view, and, had they not done so for themselves, I feel sure that none of the dull folk in the hotel at Varallo would have told them of it, even if they had stayed there a month. Before retiring to rest we made arrangements for another excursion on the morrow to the beautiful Lake of ORTA.

Sept. 8.—The sun shone gloriously this morning, and at about 9 A.M. we started on our journey across the Col de Colma. Although the landlord had promised me a mule, only a donkey, certainly a very handsome one, was brought instead. It seems to be the custom of the country to go on donkey-back across this Col, and I was obliged once more to submit to it. I was supplied with a very good side-saddle, and the whole establishment, from the landlord to the cook and stable-boys, turned out to assist in adjusting the saddle, strapping the cloaks, and facilitating or impeding the other preparations for our departure. As we were to return to Varallo on the following day, we took only such things with us as were absolutely required, and these were carried by a

porter, while an active little boy took charge of the donkey.

As I have already described this route,* I will only mention a few incidents which on this occasion occurred by the way. It happened to be a *festa*, and as we passed through the narrow streets of Varallo we met a large concourse of people coming into the town in procession with banners, and chanting as they went along. I turned up a back street to avoid them, and the boy led me through several winding lanes, which I should not otherwise have ventured to penetrate. My donkey seemed to be extremely well known in the town, and the people willingly made way for it to pass, giving it, however, many a knock as we went by to urge it onwards —an attention which I would willingly have dispensed with. We had scarcely emerged from the town before we met a country belle, a decidedly pretty young girl of a rank above the peasant-class, going to the *festa* on a nice little pony. Instead of wearing the picturesque costume of her country, she was dressed in what was no doubt intended for the last French fashion, and her voluminous outspread muslin-dress almost concealed her diminutive steed beneath its ample folds. Numerous parties of country-people thronged the road, and many were carrying to the town baskets full of peaches. A few minutes after we had left the high road, and turned to the left among the beautiful chestnut-groves which lead to the Col, we were overtaken by a man

* Ante, p. 124.

who addressed us civilly, and said that he was a guide who had been conducting an English party to Varallo, and was now on his return to Orta. It soon became quite evident that he meant to attach himself to our party, and give us the benefit of his society; and he turned out eventually to be one of the Pella boatmen, who wished to secure us for customers when we arrived there. In one respect he proved useful; for when we arrived at the Col, over which the mule-track passes, he led us above it to a wooded height, which is the true summit, and from which a most lovely view was obtained. It was, however, misty on the Monte Rosa side, and that noble mountain could not be distinguished. But on the other side, looking towards the lakes of Orta and Lugano and the plains of Piedmont, every object was distinctly visible. It was warm and pleasant at the top, and we sat for a long time on the soft grass beneath the shade of a tree enjoying the view. While thus engaged we observed a gaily-dressed party of Italian ladies and gentlemen come up the mule-path which leads from Pella, and were amused to find that their guide, to save himself trouble, took them straight on to Varallo, without conducting them to the place where we were, which commands the really fine view, and might have been reached on foot in five minutes. We had on our previous visit been served in exactly the same way. As we descended towards Pella, Mr. L— called our attention to the geological character of the

country, which deserves special notice. The rocks by the side of which we had just been passing on our ascent were, many of them, composed of granite so hard that it was not without difficulty that the geological hammer could break off a suitable specimen. But on the other side of the Col there was a wall of earth, which looked exactly like granite, yet crumbled into dust when touched. It was granite in a state of decomposition, and it seemed as if the solid rocks had been struck by some magician's wand, which had taken from them all property of cohesion, though the granite particles remained.

It was 2.30 P.M. when we reached Pella, for we had lingered most leisurely on the way. The guide who had accompanied us from Varallo instantly provided us with a boat. As we intended to go the next day to Omegna by water, and from thence to make our way across the mountains to Varallo, we took our package from the porter and sent him on with the donkey to Omegna, where he was to be in readiness to meet us on the following morning. Our boatmen then rowed us rapidly across the beautiful lake to Orta, but the sun was too scorching and blinding to allow us to enjoy the scene, and we directed them to be in readiness for an excursion on the lake in the cool of the evening. We went to the Hotel San Giulio, with which we were highly satisfied. The landlord speaks English, and does everything in his power to make his hotel agreeable

to English guests. At a short distance from the hotel, just on the outside of the town, he has an *hôtel garni*, in which he receives persons *en pension*, and English families frequently stay there for weeks together. Adjoining the *salle-à-manger* is a nicely furnished reading-room, well supplied with newspapers and books, and as we had not seen a newspaper for many a long day, we seized upon some of them with great avidity. In a very short time an admirable dinner was placed before us, followed by a dessert of

Lake of Orta.

magnificent peaches, figs, and grapes, luxuries which cannot be too highly appreciated in an Italian climate. Dinner being ended, we went to our boat, and made an excursion to the southern end of the lake, first crossing

to the Isle of San Giulio, visiting the old church there, and traversing the curious street composed of buildings which run entirely round the island, and shut out all view of the lake from those who are in it. In fact every yard of ground on which it is possible to build has some edifice constructed upon it. But we grudged the time we spent on the island, for the evening had now become inexpressibly beautiful, and we hurried back to our boat. A light cool air moved over the surface of the lake, the fierce heat of the day had disappeared, and the delicious freshness of an Italian evening had succeeded. The boat glided over the pure bright water, and our eyes wandered with unceasing delight round the hills which encircle the lake, adorned with white villas and churches, while an old castle perched on a hill gave additional picturesqueness to the scene. Occasionally a large white tern skimmed along the surface of the lake close by the boat, and our boatmen, who seemed to care but little for the scenery, watched its movements with as much interest as ourselves, resting on their oars and allowing the boat to float idly where it would :—

> "How calm! how still! the only sound
> The dripping of the oar suspended!
> The evening darkness gathers round
> By virtue's holiest powers attended."*

At last, though most reluctantly, we directed the boatmen to return to Orta. A rich purple tint was

* Wordsworth.

now spread over the mountains, and this gradually deepened into hues of black, whilst Venus, the evening-star, shone forth like a miniature moon, in her most lustrous brilliancy. When we first discerned this planet, the rays of the setting sun still reddened the horizon, and she looked like a small pale diamond; but her light gradually increased till she positively blazed in the sky. Then she disappeared behind the hills, while the whole firmament speedily became studded with myriads of stars, and the gleam, reflected from the surface of the lake, gave light enough to enable us to find our way safely back to Orta, full of the enthusiasm which scenes of so much beauty must needs inspire.

Sept. 9.—This was one of the most magnificent days of the season, and the scenery through which we were to pass was well worthy of it. Indeed we had no notion at starting of the wonderful view which, before regaining our quarters at Varallo, we were destined to enjoy from the summit of the Monte Mazzuccone, or of the exquisite beauty of the scenery about Camasco. We had a much longer day's journey before us than we supposed, and ought to have started at 7 in the morning at the latest, instead of which we lingered and loitered, enjoying the luxury of a little idleness and the comfort of the hotel. It was 9 A.M. before we left Orta. My journey, however, was very near being prevented by an accident, which fortunately did not prove serious. The staircase of the hotel is made of smooth slabs of

stone, and as I descended them in my walking boots, well studded with nails, my feet slid on the slippery surface and I fell. I felt rather faint for a few minutes, but speedily recovered, with no more serious injury than a slight sprain of my thumb. The landlord exhibited great concern at an accident which I understand occurs not unfrequently on the staircase of his hotel, and against which it is necessary that travellers should be on their guard. A few steps brought me to the edge of the lake, where our boatman and his comrade were waiting to convey us to Omegna. He was the same man who had overtaken us on the road to Pella, and as he was the first person who had fastened himself upon us when we were approaching the lake, he seemed to consider that as long as we remained there we were his property,—a sentiment which appears to be common among the boatmen. In fact, approach the lake from what quarter you will, you are sure to find that long before you are in sight of it some sturdy fellow will pounce upon your carriage, and hold fast to it until you arrive at the lake, and will battle vigorously to maintain his right of property in you, though a whole mob of boatmen should be his competitors. We glided swiftly along the lake towards Omegna. But the broad daylight and the glare of the sun, which increased every minute, were less favourable to the lake than the softer light of evening. We felt, too, in a busier frame of mind, for we knew that we had an active day before us.

In about a couple of hours we reached the northern end, and landed at Omegna. The porter was waiting our arrival on the strand, but his donkey was in the stable of the inn at the other side of the town, and he conducted us thither.

We found that there was a fair going on at Omegna. The streets were full of stalls, and crowded with people. There was a perfect throng at the inn, and every room was so crowded that I had to content myself with a seat on a bench in the passage at the entrance, where two farmers with their large dogs sat conversing on agricultural topics. As we could not possibly arrive at Varallo till the evening, and there is no place on the road where refreshment can be obtained, we thought it prudent to supply ourselves from the plentiful stores which had been provided at the inn for comers to the fair. The gentlemen accordingly made an inroad into the kitchen, where they selected a couple of young roast poulets which had just been brought smoking hot from the fire; these, added to a loaf or two of fine white bread, and a dozen ripe peaches, with a bottle of vino d'Asti, ensured us against famine. It occupied some little time to make these arrangements, and nothing could exceed the politeness of the landlord, except his evident desire to charge us a sum commensurate with the exalted idea he entertained of our dignity. He produced a neatly-written bill, the amount of which was double what he ought to have demanded, and

his feelings did not seem at all wounded when one of my companions remonstrated on the exorbitant charges, and reduced the items about one-third. The sum finally paid and thankfully accepted for the couple of fowls, bread, peaches, and wine, was 7 francs, which no doubt was considerably more than the landlord would have obtained from one of his own countrymen. Both parties, however, were perfectly satisfied, and while the discussion was going on, I heard the people who were standing round observe to one another that we were "Inglesi," and it seemed to be considered that we ought to pay for that honour.

These arrangements being at last concluded, we made ready to start; my donkey was brought out and saddled, and a crowd of persons who were very amused but very civil, watched with the greatest curiosity as I buckled on my riding-skirt, and, with the assistance of three or four persons (one to hold the bridle, another to bring a chair which I did not use, and a third to run to and fro without doing anything except increase the excitement), I contrived to mount into the saddle. A difficulty then suggested itself to the mind of our porter. He did not know the way over the Monte Mazzuccone, and wished us to return by the only road he did know, namely, by Pella and the Col de Colma. To this we decidedly objected; we had studied Wörl's map, had discovered this pass, were positive that it was practicable to go by Camasco, and go that way we would.

A boy about 12 years old was then produced, whose parents lived on the mountain near the very road by which we wished to go. He had come with his mother to the fair, and finally it was arranged that he should officiate as guide, receiving 3 francs for his services. His mother, a sturdy peasant woman, who had come to the town to sell her goods, presided at the bargain, and was in the highest state of excitement and delight at the transcendent good luck that had befallen her son. She took him by the hand and walked at the head of our procession as we wound our way through the densely thronged street of Omegna. As foreigners, we were of course objects of curiosity, and a little tail, composed of this good woman and some of the persons who had watched me mount, followed us to the outskirts of the town. The stalls which were erected along the streets were covered with various articles of clothing, such as red and yellow handkerchiefs to be worn on the head, stuff for gowns, ribbons, cutlery, hats, and men's clothes. There was also abundance of fruits and cakes. The mother of our juvenile guide appeared to know somebody at every stall, and holding her little boy by the hand, she called to her acquaintances to tell them that we were a party of English, that we were going over the mountains to Camasco, that her son was going with us to show the way, and that he was to have 3 francs! This was continually repeated, and although we got tired of it, the good woman's ardour did not appear to cool.

We were not sorry when we at last got clear of the town and of the boy's mother, and leaving the busy scene, began to ascend the excellent broad road which leads up to Quarna. Below us, on our left hand, was the beautiful Lake of Orta, and every step we ascended gave us a more extensive view of it. One could willingly have lingered there the whole day. It was just noon when we left Omegna: the sun was overpoweringly hot, and was scarcely endurable until we reached a more elevated region, where the air being light and fresh, enabled us to support its powerful rays. There were a great many country folks on the road, particularly women returning home from Omegna, and most of them were carrying heavy loads. Some supported on their heads small sacks of flour, probably of Indian corn, and these appeared to be very heavy. We passed several picturesque groups, sitting down to rest and refresh themselves, and indulge in a gossip. I was particularly struck with the handsome countenance of one of the women; she was of middle age, and when I nodded to her she returned my salutation in as dignified a manner as if she had been a queen.

The first part of our way led through vines, maize, mulberry and peach trees. We passed through Upper and Lower Quarna, which are in the midst of luxuriance and beauty; higher up we reached the meadow-land, which is kept entirely for hay, the cattle being driven to a greater elevation to pasture among the Alps. Our

worthy porter appeared to have a strong disinclination to pursue the road which we had selected, and he had one or two little private conversations with the boy who was our guide, which resulted in the latter attempting, shortly after we had left Quarna, to take us from the well defined mule path up which we were proceeding, to a smaller path on the left hand, which he assured us would take us to our destination by an easier road. We had a strong suspicion that some little *ruse* was intended to be practised, and therefore refused to quit the path along which we were going until we had made inquiries of a group of country people who were close behind. We explained to them that we wished to go to Camasco over the mountain, and asked if it were practicable for the donkey: they assured us that it was, and that the right way was not to turn to the left, as proposed, but to go straight forward, and that the route was not difficult to find. We followed their directions, and at 2.30 P.M. arrived at the foot of the Monte Mazzuccone chain, which has to be crossed in order to reach Camasco. Up to this point the road was excellent, but here the stream had to be crossed, and an excessively steep ascent to be made. Indeed the path is so steep and rough, that no one could think of riding up. I accordingly walked to the summit, leaving the donkey to be driven up by the two boys; but before we began this laborious ascent, we sat down near the wooden bridge which crosses the stream, and enjoyed an ex-

cellent lunch in one of the most beautiful green nooks that was ever seen. No place could be better suited to a pic-nic. It was delightfully shaded, and a rivulet of clear sparkling water dashing through it, diffused the most refreshing coolness, and served as a convenient icehouse for our wine. Our vigorous appetites speedily demolished the provisions brought from Omegna. The donkey, which had been turned loose to graze on the meadow, seemed to envy our felicity, and having a taste for bread, he continually came and poked his nose over me as I sat on the grass, asking me for a piece: by this means he contrived to get his fair share, which he thoroughly appreciated. I was quite sorry when, our repast being finished, we rose to quit this pretty spot, which will long live in my memory.

At 3 P.M. we began the steep ascent of Monte Mazzuccone, and it took us about an hour to reach the top. A woman who lived at a cottage near the footbridge had investigated us with much curiosity during lunch time, and when we crossed the stream, she joined our party, accompanying us up a considerable part of the mountain, until she reached a party of her friends who were at work making hay. She appeared to have a great deal to tell them about us. Although the path was really very steep, she seemed to think nothing of it, and never left off knitting all the way. She proved very useful, for having ascertained that we wished to go over the mountain to Camasco, she explained to

us very carefully that instead of bearing to the left hand or following any of the numerous paths which lead in that direction, it was necessary to bear decidedly to the right, and go where the path was most rapid and uninviting. It was very difficult to believe until we really got to the top, that the way she indicated was the right one, but she was quite correct. We were well repaid as we approached the summit of the mountain by the magnificent view which was there displayed, and which far transcended our most sanguine expectations.

In position, the Monte Mazzuccone is nearly on a line with Monte Monterone, and only a few miles to the east of it, but the former is of much greater elevation. Two years previously I had crossed the Monte Monterone, but in bad weather, and therefore cannot say whether the great celebrity it enjoys is well deserved, but I have no doubt it is, since it commands, though on a less scale, the view we now enjoyed.

> "No vapour stretched its wings; no cloud
> Cast far or near a murky shroud;
> The sky an azure field displayed;
> 'T was sunlight sheathed and gently charmed,
> Of all its sparkling rays disarmed,
> And as in slumber laid."*

The Lake of Orta was at our feet, looking scarcely bigger than a silver mirror; beyond it we could see the Lago Maggiore and the Lago di Verese, and the im-

* Wordsworth.

mense plains of Lombardy covered with a multitude of Italian cities and towns. One could easily count more than fifty or sixty, and I have no doubt that with a good glass the Cathedral of Milan could have been distinguished. We had, however, nothing with us but a small opera glass, and there was no one to point out which, among the multitude of places visible, was Milan. To our great astonishment, on looking towards the north-east, we saw, at an immense distance, the snowy peaks of a long chain of mountains, including the whole grand Bernina group; and towering above them all, we recognised by its lofty height, enormous bulk, and peculiar shape, the Ortler Spitz or Monte Cristallo. This celebrated mountain, one of the highest in the Tyrol, towers above the Stelvio Pass, and although we had not seen it since crossing that pass about ten years before, we at once identified it among the numerous peaks which stretched along the horizon. I should think its distance from the place where we stood must have been at least 120 English miles, but, even beyond that, we saw with great distinctness another chain of snowy summits. This will give some idea of the extent and variety of the view which we enjoyed; and as it came upon us quite unexpectedly, it delighted us all the more. We lingered as long as we could examining the distant mountains, and then investigating the cities on the plain, and endeavouring to make out Milan Cathedral. However, as we had a long distance to go, and were

afraid of being benighted, we were compelled to hurry from a spot where I would willingly have lingered half the day.

At 4.30 P.M. we began to descend into the Valley of Camasco, down a path of great steepness, but beautifully wooded, and adorned with a profusion of wild flowers. The purple monkshood was in full bloom, and I think I never before saw such a quantity of it growing wild. We were now journeying with our faces towards the south, and the view we enjoyed, though of totally different character from that which we had met with on the other side of the mountain, was one of singular beauty and vast extent. There were no snowy summits visible, but we looked over range upon range of lofty mountains separated from each other by deep valleys; we counted distinctly eight of these mountain ranges placed one behind the other in succession, and all were most varied in colour, form, and position. The little boy who had been our guide left us on the summit of the mountain, and on interrogating the porter as to his own knowledge of the road, he admitted that he had never been there before, but said that he had been at Camasco three years ago, and knew the way from that place to Varallo. As Camasco was immediately at the foot of the mountain we were descending, this seemed sufficient. He had been mightily chagrined by our refusing to go by the easier route of the Col de Colma, and appeared to entertain the most contemptuous opinion of the sublime

scenery we were passing through. When he told us he had never been there before, he did so in a manner which clearly indicated that he never wished to go again. The road, he said, was "troppo scabrosa" (too rugged), and I dare say I should have thought the same if I had had to carry his burden. We descended the mountain at a very good pace, leaving the man and boy to bring on the donkey as well as they could, and I was really astonished to find with what celerity the poor animal managed to scramble to the bottom. At one spot in our descent we found that the trees and brushwood had been cut down, leaving a broad bare space in the forest, and while looking round to ascertain the cause, we came to a group of grim charcoal-burners, clustered round a heap of wood which was rapidly being converted into charcoal. It is wonderful what a clearance these men make in a forest in any district where there are works for smelting metal, or any town requiring a large supply of fuel. In fact, the working of many mines is stopped because the forests around them have become exhausted. We were not at all pleased to see the devastation which these charcoal-burners had already made. Heaps of blackened wood were lying around in every direction, and from some of them dense smoke issued. The delicate little flowers, which had been protected under the sheltering branches of the forest, were withered and trodden under foot, and one felt quite melancholy to see such havoc.

At the bottom of the mountain we came upon the village of Camasco, through which a stream rushes along in its rocky bed. Several of the villagers ran to the windows to see us pass. We crossed a bridge to the right bank of the stream, where we found a very good path leading to Varallo. Here I attempted to ride a little, for I felt rather fatigued after my trying walk over the mountain we had just traversed; but I found that the poor donkey, though very willing, was also very tired, and its pace became so slow that I shortly dismounted and joined my companions on foot, fearing that unless we quickened our pace we should not reach our destination before dark. When we were still about three or four miles distant from Varallo, we found ourselves in a ravine of the most exquisite beauty. Steep rocks of great height girded us in on each side, and large masses which had rolled down to the bottom, instead of remaining bare and desolate, as you find them near the higher summits, were covered with the richest vegetation. Mosses, ferns, and flowers in great variety adorned every bank and fringed every rock. Eager as we were to push on in our journey, it was impossible not to make a halt for a few minutes, to enjoy a survey of this charming spot. The place was a perfect gem of beauty, and my only regret was to be hurried away from it so soon.

We could not help remarking, as we journeyed to Varallo, how few persons we had seen on our route after reaching the Monte Mazzucconc. Even between

Camasco and Varallo we met but two persons: one was a curé returning to his mountain parish, and the other was a man carrying a wooden cradle on his back, which caused us much amusement. Shortly before reaching Varallo we had to follow the right side of a small torrent, which was carefully embanked in order to prevent its overflowing the neighbouring meadows. This embankment was not a very solid structure, and it had suffered so much from recent floods that the road beside it was almost destroyed. At one place, where a dam had been constructed, the donkey was in danger of perishing; for the porter and boy left it to struggle through the water and loose stones as it best could, without any assistance on their part. It was becoming rapidly dark, and the frightened animal came to the very brink of the dam, where it was in danger of being swept over by the torrent; indeed if Mr. L— had not fortunately seen the critical position of affairs, and rushed back and given proper directions for its rescue, the consequences might have been serious; for the man and boy had both lost head, and did nothing but shout at the donkey without any attempt to help it.

I was very glad when, on reaching the level plain in which Varallo is placed, I saw the Sacro Monte rising above us, with lights twinkling in the dwellings there like little stars in the sky. We were now among fruit-trees, Indian corn, and vines, through which by a narrow path we reached Varallo. They always consider it a point

of honour among the mountains that one shall arrive at the place of destination mounted, whether the animal be horse, mule, or donkey; and accordingly, to satisfy the wishes of the porter and boy, as well as my own,—for I was really tired,—I remounted the donkey and entered Varallo with becoming dignity. I had ridden the little creature only a very moderate distance, and when I found him so knocked up I felt a strong suspicion that he had not been fairly treated; and that instead of having been taken to Omegna the preceding evening, as we had directed, the porter had stopped among some of his boon companions at Pella, and had taken him on to Omegna in the morning, arriving only a short time before ourselves. I am not satisfied also that he was properly fed; at all events the avidity with which he devoured the bread when we were at lunch gave me some misgivings, and I fear that the people here are not always so considerate as they should be to poor dumb animals.

It was late when we reached Varallo, and we found the place in quite as much excitement as when we left it, though from a different cause. The people were then busy about a *festa*, and they were now making preparations for an illumination in honour of the Princess Mathilde, cousin of the French Emperor, who was expected to arrive to-night. The streets were crowded, and as the people had nothing else to do, we had a very liberal share of their attention as we passed to our hotel.

I was very glad when we at last arrived there, and I confess that not long after dinner I felt tired enough to wish to go quietly to bed; but the Princess had not yet arrived, and the illuminations were only just commencing. The principal rooms in the Hôtel de la Poste open out into a balcony which overlooks the river, and the whole length of this balcony was festooned with coloured paper lanterns and oil-lamps, which lighted up our room brilliantly. The bridge adjoining the hotel, over which the Princess was to pass, and the opposite bank of the river, were resplendent with lanterns and torches. An old clock-tower opposite had also a circle of light round the face of the clock, and as the night was very dark it was impossible to discern on what object the lights were placed, so that they looked in their elevated position like a circlet of stars. I observed that this clock, as well as many others in Piedmont, when striking the hour repeated it a second time. It was impossible for travellers so tired as myself to participate very warmly in the enthusiasm manifested by the crowd when the Princess arrived and crossed the bridge, surrounded by a mounted escort bearing torches. I rejoiced in the idea that the affair had come to an end, and that one might now go to sleep. This, however, was quite a mistake, for not only did the guns fire a salute, and the band play 'Partant pour la Syrie,' in their loudest tones, but a battery of fireworks opened upon us, which continued to crack, fizz, bang, and glare opposite our

windows for many a long weary hour, until at last, the supply becoming fortunately exhausted, the noise ceased, the excitement subsided, and we were permitted to sleep as only tired travellers can.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PILE ALPE AND VALLE DI BORS.

Our farewell to Varallo — The Val Sesia — The drive to Piode — The inn at Mollia — A side-saddle improvised — The cavalcade of mules — Riva and its wretched inn — Arrive at Alagna — The Curé Gnifetti — Excursion to the Pile Alpe — A weasel-chase — Monte Rosa from the Pile Alpe — The Valle di Bors and its châlets — Another view of Monte Rosa — The lazy guide — More side-saddle difficulties — Visit from three Italian gentlemen.

Sept. 10.—We left Varallo this morning to go to Alagna, and before finally quitting the place I will observe that it forms one of the very best stations which persons who wish to explore this district can select as their head-quarters. It is in direct communication with some of the most beautiful of the Italian valleys, and it is possible to make from it a series of delightful excursions by going up one of these valleys and then crossing into another, and thus returning to Varallo by a complete circle. Side-saddles are also to be had there, which is a matter of great importance; but at present the good people are without mules or ponies for the use of travellers, and some difficulty in that respect may therefore be experienced. Varallo also appears to be unprovided with professional guides, though if English

travellers became plentiful there, this deficiency would no doubt be soon remedied.

There is a very good carriage-road up the Val Sesia to Piode, a distance of about twelve English miles; and we hired a carriage with two horses to take us there, for which we paid twenty francs. The landlord at Varallo said that I should be sure to find a mule at Piode that would take me on to Alagna, and that there was an excellent mule-path all the way; but he said nothing about a side-saddle, nor did it occur to me that I ought to have borrowed one at Varallo to take me on from Piode, which I afterwards learned was the plan generally adopted. We crossed the bridge and proceeded up the left bank of the Sesia, passing through a fine rich valley; but as we had lately been spoiled by so great a variety of splendid scenery, this did not appear to us very remarkable. At Balmuccia the valley becomes barer, but we had a beautiful peep up the Val Sermenta, which we here passed on our right hand. It was about a two hours' drive to Piode, and the weather was magnificent, but intensely hot. We expected to have found something like a village at Piode, with an *albergo;* but we saw nothing but two or three cottages and outbuildings. I have since heard that beds may be obtained here, but there is a scarcity of food. Not a soul took any trouble to attend to us, but one or two little children came to gaze on the strangers who had arrived in a carriage. Our coachman jumped

off the box, and searched about to find somebody. After an interval of a few minutes, during which we were wondering what would happen, he made his appearance, accompanied by a muleteer whom he had discovered in a neighbouring stable. This man had charge of a string of mules which he was taking to Riva, which is about half an hour short of Alagna; and he offered to convey our baggage to Alagna for three francs, an offer which we thought very reasonable, and gladly accepted. He had no mule to carry me; and as the walk from Piode to Alagna is one of nearly five hours, I felt some little uneasiness as to whether I could manage to go so far on foot beneath the broiling sunshine in a hot Italian valley. It is not difficult to walk a considerable distance when one breathes the cool light air of a mountain-top, but to trudge for several hours along dusty roads at the bottom of a valley is a very different undertaking. Our coachman assured us that if I would only proceed to Mollia, a distance of about two hours, I should certainly find a mule and comfortable saddle there; and with this consoling assurance I started, having first unfurled a capacious umbrella to protect me from the sun. There was a delicious breeze in the valley, and the chestnut-trees gave a refreshing shade; but although we walked at a gentle pace, I felt rather fatigued when we reached Mollia.

There is a very tolerable inn at Mollia, and we stayed an hour and a half to rest and dine. The landlord

served us up a remarkably nice little dinner. When I mention a fact of this kind, it is in order to remove the erroneous impression that nothing is to be had in these Italian valleys fit to eat, and that there are no inns with decent accommodation. In the travellers' book at this *albergo* there were several entries which spoke very well of it, and one gentleman who had been detained there by illness had recorded his acknowledgments to the landlord, who had showed him every possible attention. After discussing our dinner, we devoted our thoughts to the next important topic, namely, how I should ride to Alagna. The landlord said he would provide a mule for five francs, but his difficulty was about a saddle. He had no side saddle in the English style; he brought up a large, clumsy man's saddle for me to look at, but it was immediately condemned as impracticable. At last they managed, in very awkward fashion, to construct something for me in the best way they could out of a pack saddle, putting a handful or two of hay upon it, with a cloth tied over to hold the whole together, and a stirrup at the side. Upon this I was mounted, and was then instructed to take hold of a piece of cord fastened to the front. There was of course no pommel! I had not the least command over the mule, for the only approach to a bridle consisted of a cord twisted through its mouth, with the other end fastened round its neck. Ladies who do not take a

side saddle with them will therefore understand what they may frequently have to encounter on the Italian side of the Alps. The Piedmontese innkeepers, who with one or two exceptions have made but little provision for the wants of lady-riders, will of course improve in this as well as many other respects when the number of travellers becomes greater, and the remuneration sufficiently repays them for the expenditure necessary to supply such luxuries. Donkey saddles, I may add, are always exceedingly small, and are made to suit the size of the animal, not the rider.

We joined the cavalcade which the man who had the care of transporting our baggage was conducting to Riva. It is not improbable that the mule I rode belonged to him, and that the landlord of the inn at Mollia and he divided the five francs between them. This cavalcade consisted of six mules, which followed each other in line. The first carried our baggage, the others were loaded with sacks of flour, barrels of wine, and hampers of various things. The only mode of conveying merchandise up these valleys is on mules, except what is borne on the backs of women, for the men do not appear to condescend to carry burdens. The string of mules was guided entirely by the voice of the men accompanying us, who now and then cracked their whips and called to the animals, promising them something which could not have been at all pleasant, if one may judge from the energetic tone of voice of the

drivers, and the way in which the mules hurried forwards when they heard it. The men, who always kept at some distance behind us, lingered occasionally; the mules could then no longer resist the temptation of nibbling the patches of grass which grew by the wayside, and would make desperate efforts to get a mouthful, in spite of wooden cages fastened over their mouths to prevent them. The mule I rode was similarly adorned! The disadvantage of being the last of the cavalcade was that if any of the number stopped all the rest behind stopped too, nor did they again go on until they were all jammed up together in a heap, my feet being almost crushed as we jostled against the mule before us. I was perfectly powerless to prevent this from occurring, as I could not even reach the rope round my mule's neck. When the muleteer saw this state of affairs, he would call to the offending mule by name, and we were speedily in motion again. Just as we approached Riva we had a view of Monte Rosa, but thick clouds soon covered it. We parted at Riva with the other mules, whose destination was there: at this circumstance my mule was perfectly heart-broken, crying piteously after its companions, whom it was no longer permitted to follow. In vain the muleteer tried his persuasive powers—the animal would not move forward to Alagna; then he untied the cord and tried to pull it along, but the mule planted its feet firmly on the ground, and for a long time resisted all his efforts. At

last, under the influence of a series of violent tugs, we made progress by very slow degrees until we got past Riva, when the poor animal, reconciled to its fate, gave over further resistance.

Riva is a small village, most prettily perched on a natural terrace, at a considerable height above the Sesia, and commands the entrance to the Val Col Dobbia, which leads to the pass by which many misguided travellers go to Gressonay. Nothing can be more picturesque than the situation of Riva, or more beautiful than the view from it. Monte Rosa is altogether unseen from the Val Sesia until you arrive at Riva, but a magnificent view of it is obtained thence. The appearance of Riva when viewed from a distance, especially from Alagna, has been justly compared to a fortress, or small city compassed by a wall and adorned with towers and pinnacles.* But I believe that, like many other picturesque places, its attractions vanish when viewed too closely; and that no one can be charmed with Riva who has to take refuge in its wretched inn. Mr. Hinchliff, who appears almost unconscious of hardship in travelling, declares that the little inn at Riva was the worst he stayed at in the course of his journey, and that the Pass of the Col Dobbia is the most uninteresting.† We took warning by his experience and avoided both, going to the inn at Alagna and crossing to Gressonay by the Col d'Ollen.

* Gnifetti, 'Nozioni Topografiche del Monte Rosa,' p. 13.

† 'Summer Months among the Alps,' p. 187.

We were not more than half an hour in going from Riva to Alagna, and passed on our way the entrance to a copper mine, the workings of which have now ceased. There was an immense heap of débris at the entrance, and Mr. L—'s geological hammer was speedily employed upon it. We found on the heap a large quantity of asbestos, and obtained some beautiful specimens. It was saturated with moisture, and seeing it in such profusion we almost doubted for a moment whether it really was asbestos. But Mr. L— assured us that it was, and so it turned out to be. We soon afterwards reached Alagna, where I was heartily glad to dismount at the Hôtel Monte Rosa, a very comfortable inn, and kept by civil persons. Indeed the people at Alagna are very proud of it, as they well may be when it is compared with the inn at Riva. Gnifetti, who is the parish priest of Alagna, and takes a warm interest in all that appertains to his parish, describes it thus:—"un albergo assai comodo e bello, che è stato onorato dalla presenza e dimora per due giorni delle LL. AA. RR. il Principe di Piemonte ed il Duca di Aosta nel Luglio, 1856!!!" Notwithstanding this glowing description, the inn is of course a humble one; but it is far better than any we had expected to meet with in so wild a region. We were, however, a little disappointed at finding, that although we were very comfortably housed at Alagna, which is under the very shadow of Monte Rosa, that magnificent mountain was nowhere visible from the vil-

lage; nor, in fact, could a particle of snow or an inch of glacier be any where seen. This is accounted for by the circumstance that Alagna is placed at the southern side of the Staffelberg or Stofulhorn, which intervenes between the village and Monte Rosa, and not only shuts out the view, but completely shelters it from the cold winds which proceed from the mountains. Hence the temperature of Alagna is milder than it otherwise would be; and the meadows, which are remarkable for their fertility, nourish numerous herds of cattle, while forests of pine trees, and the variegated foliage of the maple, beech, and wild cherry, give an appearance of civilization to a scene where one would have expected to have met only with frozen sterility.

> "Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
> Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
> And bowery hollows." *

I am afraid that the first part of this description of the "Island-valley of Avilion" does not really apply either to the well-sheltered Alagna or to any other spot in Europe, but the latter part is strikingly true and apposite.

The village of Alagna is curiously squeezed in between the river Sesia and the base of the Staffelberg, which leaves but small space for the buildings, and the site is so steep that the roof of one building is frequently on

* Tennyson.

the level of the basement of the house above it. The passage between the houses is so narrow that two loaded mules could only just pass one another. The church is well and substantially built, but without architectural pretension. The veteran Gnifetti prides himself that even in this remote place education is so far advanced as to enable him to state as a positive fact that there is not a man or woman belonging to Alagna but is able to some extent to read and write.* They must in truth be many of them good linguists, for it is necessary for a resident there to understand both German and Italian. Nothing but Italian (or a patois of it) is spoken in the lower part of the Val Sesia, but at Alagna some remains of the German race are still found, and they cling with great tenacity to the language of their fatherland, speaking what Gnifetti contemptuously describes as "un cattivo Tedesco."

There were several travellers besides ourselves in the Hôtel Monte Rosa: among them was an intelligent Doctor of Laws from Vienna, who had just crossed the Turlo, and was going the next morning to Gressonay by the Col Dobbia. As these passes have the reputation of being two of the very dullest among the Pennine Alps, one of my companions remonstrated with him about his travelling by them, when other routes much more interesting might be selected; but he excused himself by saying that as far as the Turlo was con-

* 'Nozioni Topografiche,' p. 6.

cerned, although the first part was very long and wearisome, he was amply repaid when he arrived at last in full view of Monte Rosa on the heights above Alagna. A few hours' walk from Alagna would, however, enable any one to reach that spot and return, and we were therefore not quite satisfied with the learned gentleman's reasons.

Sept. 11.—This was a most brilliant day. The sun shone brightly, and there was a light, refreshing breeze. When we looked before breakfast from the balcony of the *salle-à-manger*, a little group of Italian gentlemen was seen standing below. Among them, conspicuous by his height, venerable appearance, and white hair, was Gnifetti, who has distinguished himself by his ascents of Monte Rosa; the others were friends of his, who were staying at Alagna on what Goldoni calls a "villeggiatura." My companions speedily joined the party, and all were soon engaged in energetic conversation. As English travellers, more particularly English ladies, are at present but rarely seen at Alagna, their appearance excites some little curiosity, and the people of the country are, from motives of kindness and a pride they really feel in their wonderful mountains, always most willing to give the traveller the benefit of their assistance and advice. We had determined to make the interesting excursion to the Pile Alpe, on account of finding it so strongly recommended in Mr. King's book. That work was not then published, but we were

favoured by being allowed to have the proof-sheets, and we found the information derived from them invaluable. My companions told Gnifetti of our intention, of which he highly approved. We thought it better to take a guide with us, but we afterwards discovered that the route to the Pile Alpe is so easy to find, that a mistake would be almost impossible. It was necessary, however, to have some one to carry the refreshments for our mid-day halt, and we therefore engaged the guide recommended by the landlord, though our subsequent experience of him was not very satisfactory. He was a strong, robust fellow, with dark Italian features, and an expression of cunning in his eyes. He was always civil, but the bent of his mind seemed to be the avoidance, as much as possible, of everything like extra exertion.

The long conversation which my friends had with Gnifetti, and our inquiries respecting the practicability of my being able to cross the Col d'Ollen on the morrow, consumed a good deal of time, and it was not until 10 A.M. that we started on our excursion to the Pile Alpe. This was not very judicious, for although we had plenty of time for the journey before us (and indeed time to spare), yet the sun had already considerable power before we reached a sufficient elevation to moderate its heat. We followed the path which leads up along the Sesia, first on one bank, and then on the other, but always keeping on the right bank of the stream wherever the

path allowed. In about three quarters of an hour we reached the gold mines of Kries, where there are large buildings and crushing mills, all now abandoned. We next reached the little chapel of San Antonio, just above which a wooden bridge crosses the Sesia, and leads to a path on the left bank of the stream which eventually conducts the traveller to the Turlo. We did not, however, cross this bridge, for the rest of our course was all on the right bank. We rested for a short time on an inviting wooden bench outside the chapel. Opposite us were some huge blocks of stone, which had rolled down from the side of the Staffelberg, but were now covered with vegetation. As we sat there very quietly, a weasel crept from under one of the stones, peeped at us with his keen, bright little eyes, and then disappeared. My companions immediately gave chase, but he ran from one stone to another, and finally escaped, to my great satisfaction. Leaving on our right hand the bridge which crosses to the Turlo Pass, we proceeded up a very steep acclivity which leads to the Pile Alpe; indeed the path was so much like a staircase, that it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for a mule to have climbed it. I made the whole excursion on foot, and found it perfectly easy. We were only an hour and a-half in walking from the hotel to the Pile Alpe, and we might have done it in a shorter time.

On arriving at the Pile Alpe we had first to pass

through a little cluster of châlets and cowhouses, which were as unsavoury as can be imagined. Not a soul was visible. We then found ourselves in a beautiful green meadow, and there, spreading a plaid over some tufts of heather, beneath a sort of mound which sheltered us from the cool breeze, we sat down to survey at our leisure the wonderful scene before us. We were in the midst of the richest verdure, beside a pretty rivulet, whose tiny waters were obstructed by the luxuriance of the vegetation through which it flowed. The hill-side on our left was covered with larches rising abruptly above it, whilst immediately in front was seen the mighty mass of Monte Rosa, lifting itself up to a prodigious height in the unclouded sky, its summits covered with snow, and its sides clothed with glaciers, out of which rugged dark rocks projected in strong contrast to the ice-fields on every side of them. On our right hand was a deep valley, which commences in the very heart of the mountain, and in which the waters of the Sesia find their origin, and flow down to Alagna. The view of Monte Rosa from the Pile Alpe is altogether different to that which we enjoyed from the Belvedere: indeed we might as well have been looking at a totally different mountain, for the principal peaks now visible were the rounded snowy tops of the Parrot Spitze and Signal Kuppe, whilst those which form the great objects of attraction from Macugnaga were completely concealed. If Mont Blanc is the monarch of

mountains, surely Monte Rosa is justly called the Queen of the Alps, and a mighty queen she is, and beautiful under every aspect!

Our Alagna guide had seated himself in a very snug nook, and seemed disposed to make himself comfortable there for the rest of the day: he certainly would have done nothing to have induced us to go a step farther, but we remembered that there was another and a finer view from the Valle di Bors or Bours, and therefore, after we had thoroughly satiated our eyes with the glorious view from the Pile Alpe, we determined to push upwards and seek for fresh adventures, and our unenergetic guide reluctantly rose to show us the way. We walked across the green meadow, and at the farther end of it, a little on the left hand after passing through a fine grove of larches, we began a very steep ascent up the side of the mountain, where a kind of staircase of rocks led us to the entrance of the "Plan d'Embours." It took us about an hour to climb from the Pile Alpe to the châlets of Bors. We sat down to rest for a short time by the way, and a girl overtook and passed us on the rocky path; she had a heavy load in the basket on her back, but tripped along lightly without shoes or stockings. I particularly noticed the use she made of her toes in walking. She clung with them to the stones and projecting rocks on the path, and thus balanced herself much more easily and firmly than she could have done had she worn the stiff sole of

a boot, which would have prevented any action of the toes.

The châlets of Bors are placed just above the narrow entrance of the flat, marshy-looking plain to which they give name. This plain must be a mile or two long: it is at the bottom of a valley which forms the northern boundary of the Staffelberg, and continuing onwards, runs also along the northern side of the Ollen. Its opposite side is bounded by a lofty ridge, one of the spurs proceeding from Monte Rosa, and at its extremity there is a magnificent waterfall, which, fed by the glaciers of the Monte Rosa chain, leaps with an immense volume of water down the height of about 600 feet. This forms a splendid object even from the distance at which we stood. It is obvious that this great grassy basin must once have been the bed of a lake: indeed its outlet, which is at the top of the rocky staircase by which we ascended, is so narrow that it might easily be blocked up; and if this were done, the enormous cascade at the other extremity would speedily fill it again. I never saw a place where a lake might be sooner or more easily made. At present it affords pasturage to a large number of cattle.

When we reached the Valle di Bors we looked about us to find a convenient spot on which to bivouac and take our lunch, but it was not very easy to find one. The sun shone powerfully upon us, yet there was a rush of cold air into the valley, and we were afraid of getting

a chill. We tried to find a sheltered nook behind some of the châlets, but this plan was speedily abandoned, on account of its unsavoury neighbourhood. At last, after a good deal of fastidious picking and choosing, we selected a satisfactory spot and had our lunch. Several little rivulets of the purest spring water flow just below the châlets, into the glacier-fed stream from the waterfall, and our guide fetched us from one of them a can of the most icy cold, transparent water. This, mixed with a little vino d'Asti, completed our felicity. One of the principal châlets was inhabited, and we observed on its front a fresco painting of some merit, the colours of which were quite fresh. It was a picture of the Virgin, and bore the date 1782. Our guide had once more made up his mind that we had got to the end of our journey; but my companions were not so easily satisfied, and feeling invigorated by the rest and refreshment they had enjoyed, they determined to proceed up the ridge on the right or northern side of the Valle di Bors, for the purpose of getting another view of Monte Rosa; for where we now sat the whole chain of Monte Rosa was invisible. I expressed my wish to go with them, but the lazy guide, who evidently desired we should go no farther, solemnly assured us that "Madame" could not go higher up. He evidently calculated that if I must return, the gentlemen would return with me; but in that respect I was not disposed to humour him. I had already walked

down by myself from the Æggisch-horn and the Belvedere, and as it was a perfectly well-defined path all the way to Alagna, I saw no reason why the gentlemen should not go on with the guide and I go back by myself. Having formed this resolution, and wished them a pleasant excursion to a place where I was sure they would have a magnificent view, and full of regret that I was not to accompany them, I took my alpenstock in hand, and, folding a book in my plaid, began to retrace my steps very leisurely to the Pile Alpe. The guide was excessively dismayed when he heard my determination, for in fact, as I afterwards learned, there was not a word of truth in his representations. Instead of a pathway too difficult for a lady, my friends assured me that in less than half an hour they reached the summit of the grassy ridge, shaped something like a hog's back, which intervenes between the châlets of Bors and Monte Rosa. I learned also, to my great disappointment, that the view was as magnificent as the path was easy. The Victor-horn, the Schwartz-horn, the Ludwigshöhe, the Parrot Spitze, and the Signal Kuppe, are here seen even more grandly than from the Pile Alpe; but the Zumstein Spitze, the Höchste Spitze, and the Nord End are still invisible. The general features of the view are in fact the same whether beheld from the Terrace of Riva, from the Pile Alpe, or from the ridge above Bors, but each as you ascend is on an increasing scale of magnificence.

The vexation I naturally felt when I learned how the guide had deceived me was a little soothed by an amusing account of the adventures which my companions had after they had left me. They walked along the ridge as far as a châlet there, at which place Gnifetti* assures his readers that travellers are sure to meet with a good fire and the finest milk, generously offered by a lively and agreeable young shepherdess. My friends, however, if their own story is to be believed, saw no young shepherdess, but a couple of fierce dogs instead rushed out, and barked at them so violently that they thought it best to keep their distance. The troubles of the guide were even now not at an end, for Mr. L— was struck with a sudden fancy to examine the geological character of some of the rocks at a distance, or to make a closer investigation of the structure of the glacier, and, telling the guide to follow him, he set off at a prodigious pace up the steepest acclivities, over the sharpest rocks, and along the rough bed of a watercourse. In fact, he did not stop until he reached a place called the Alpe Vendecco. H—, however, sat himself down on some bilberry bushes on the ridge, and quietly examined with his glass the different green patches on the mountain in search of chamois, occasionally turning round to observe with intense satisfaction the dance that was being given to the unwilling guide. This latter personage was, indeed, completely disappointed of the

* 'Nozioni Topografiche,' p. 35.

enjoyment of the easy day which he had proposed to himself.

I had a very agreeable walk down to Alagna, and collected on my way a perfect heap of wild raspberries, and a fresh bunch of rhododendrons. When I got to the Pile Alpe, I again sat down, and gazed for nearly an hour on the wonderful panorama around me. I had a book with me, but it was impossible to read in the midst of such glorious scenery. I did not meet a single human creature on my way back, except a woman whom I passed at the châlets of the Pile Alpe. We were both anxious for a little conversation, but unfortunately we could not understand one another, and therefore after several ineffectual efforts I was obliged to wish her good afternoon, and proceed on my journey. When I reached the little chapel of San Antonio, I again rested there for a short time, and my attention was particularly struck by some huge masses of rock close by, which were of a character with which I was unacquainted. I was pleased to find that my companions were also struck with them as they returned, and Mr. L— had brought with him a fine specimen broken off the largest, which he pronounced to be a mass of rock quartz. After a very agreeable walk, I got back to the inn at Alagna with no further adventures.

The landlord has no mules, nor any means of forwarding travellers on their way; but a person who owns some mules came from Riva this afternoon to

arrange about one to carry me on the morrow. It turned out that he had not such a thing as a side-saddle, but he ventured to ask no less than 15 francs for a mule merely to carry me to the foot of the Col d'Ollen, without ascending it. This extravagant demand was of course peremptorily rejected; eight francs were offered, and the man was told that if he did not take that, the assistance of his mule would be dispensed with. He quickly accepted the sum offered, and we afterwards found that he had never been up the pass before, though he lives in its immediate vicinity. The ordinary path for mules to Gressonay is by the Col Dobbia, and he had no personal knowledge of any other; but he was ready enough in asserting that no mule could possibly cross the Col d'Ollen, or go higher than the steep acclivity at its foot. This we afterwards found by experience to be incorrect. He promised to build me the best saddle that could be constructed for the occasion. I confess that when I thought of the steepness of the path I should have to ascend, and remembered the feeling of insecurity which attended my ride from Mollia hither, I was not altogether without misgivings as to some serious difficulty before the day was over. There appeared, however, no help for it, as I would on no account go by the Col Dobbia, if the Col d'Ollen were at all practicable.

We had no sooner finished our dinner than we received a visit from three Italian gentlemen, friends

of the Curé Gnifetti, whose kindness induced them to call for the purpose of ascertaining whether they could be of any assistance by giving us the benefit of their experience and advice. One of them was a gentleman from Turin; another was a young Count from Novara, whose intelligence and knowledge of the mountains struck us forcibly. The third, whose name I may venture to mention, was Dr. Giuseppe Farinetti of Alagna, who, I believe, is a coadjutor or assistant of Gnifetti in his spiritual duties, and was his companion on his grand excursion in August 1842, when they succeeded in reaching the summit of the Signal Kuppe. There are few persons in this neighbourhood who are more distinguished mountaineers than Dr. G. Farinetti. We had a long and most agreeable conversation with these gentlemen, and they gave us some very valuable information. Dr. Farinetti, who is enthusiastic in his appreciation of the scenery round Alagna, strongly recommended us to adhere to our resolution of going by the Col d'Ollen. Both he and the Count most strenuously impressed on our minds that we must not merely cross the Col when we arrived there, which is the plan generally adopted by travellers, but that we must also ascend to the summit of the Mont Ollen (or Gemstein), which is on the right hand of the pass, and in fact shuts out from the Col nearly all view of Monte Rosa. This advice proved invaluable, and we were amply repaid for following it. We observed this

evening an English lady and gentleman sitting at an adjoining table in the *salle-à-manger*, but we were so engaged with our Italian friends that we had no opportunity of conversing with them; we afterwards learned that they had arrived to-day from Gressonay by the Col Dobbia.

CHAPTER XIV.

FROM ALAGNA TO GRESSONAY BY THE COL D'OLLEN.

Departure from Alagna — A lady's sidesaddle— A pattern mule and mule-driver — Innkeepers and guides — The Val d'Ollen — Difficulties of ascent — Traces of ancient moraines — A day's exploit for a first-rate walker — A misadventure — Ascent of the Col d'Ollen — Ptarmigan — View from Gemstein — Early explorers of Monte Rosa — The descent to Gressonay — Serpentine rocks — A rain-storm on the mountain — Baron Peccoz — Arrival at Gressonay St. Jean — The "Pension de la Pierre" — An obliging landlord — Herr Zumstein — Val de Lys — Expedition to Cogne — Choice of routes from Gressonay.

Sept. 12.—We rose this morning at five o'clock in order that we might have plenty of time for our journey across the Col d'Ollen to Gressonay. From the descriptions which our visitors last night had given us, I was aware that I should have to walk a considerable part of the distance; but I felt no anxiety on that score, if only ample time were given. The morning was most propitious, but rather cold. Indeed as Alagna is at a great height above the level of the sea, the early morning air must always be rather chilly there. We breakfasted as quickly as we could, but notwithstanding all our anxiety to start early, we did not take our departure till 7 A.M. This was occasioned by an incident which, although it delayed us a little, proved very opportune. My

great anxiety was of course about my mule, and the sort of saddle I was to ride on. The mule had arrived from Riva, and as I stood at the window of the *salle-à-manger* I could see him below tied to a ring in the wall, and upon him a huge pack-saddle, like that upon which I had ridden from Mollia. As I knew I had a very difficult journey before me, and had felt myself so utterly powerless on the former occasion, it had occurred to me that if I had two stirrups on the left side, one shorter than the other, I might possibly be able to get a firmer seat. I had therefore requested that two stirrups might be attached. H— went down to examine what kind of mule had been brought, and how my directions had been followed; and he presently returned with the unwelcome intelligence that the animal was a heavy, clumsy creature, quite unfitted for mountain climbing; and he had found to his great amusement that the two stirrups had been placed on opposite sides of the saddle, evidently in the full expectation that I should ride up à la Tatar. This of course excited my lively indignation; and as I looked out of the window to see whether matters were as bad as represented, I saw a man leading along another mule on which there was an excellent lady's saddle, and he was leisurely taking his departure from the hotel. Surprised and delighted at the sight of the saddle, I called to H— and told him what I saw. He immediately ran to the balcony, and shouted to the man who was leading the mule to stop; and then,

running down stairs, overtook him in a minute, and found that he had on the previous afternoon brought over the Col Dobbia the English lady whose arrival is mentioned at the close of the last chapter, and he was then on the point of returning by the same route. The man was perfectly willing not only to take me to the foot of the Pass of the Ollen, but was quite confident that he could take his mule across it, notwithstanding that he had never actually been there, and the Riva muleteer, who was as ignorant of the pass as himself, asserted that the undertaking was impossible. The services of the man and mule were of course immediately engaged, all my previous anxiety was at once dissipated, and when I consider the kind of places I had to go up, and how impossible it would have been for me to have kept a secure seat on the clumsy pack-saddle, I really look back with gratitude to the circumstance of my having thus been unexpectedly supplied with what proved to be one of the very best and safest mules, and one of the bravest and most careful guides, in all Piedmont. In fact they proved a very pattern mule and pattern guide. Had I not looked out of the window at that very moment, they would have been out of sight in a twinkling, and I should have been obliged to climb on foot up some of the worst parts of the ascent, which would have greatly delayed us and fatigued me beyond measure. In this respect there was reason to complain of the conduct of the landlord of the hotel at Alagna; for although he knew the great diffi-

culty we were in about a side-saddle, and we had actually discussed with him whether we should send to Varallo for one, he never gave us the slightest intimation that a man had arrived on the previous evening with a mule fully equipped as we desired, and was about to return this morning to Gressonay. He had also given countenance to the man who had asked fifteen francs for a mule to go merely to the foot of the pass, a distance of about a couple of hours, and we owed no thanks to him that the demand was subsequently reduced to nearly half its amount. He provided us also with three porters to carry our luggage to Gressonay at the rate of ten francs each, including the *retour*, which was more than we had paid elsewhere, but he assured us that it was the proper sum. I trust that no unfair imputation is conveyed in the suggestion that some portion of the francs paid for mules and porters went into the landlord's pocket. In fact we ascertained in some other places, from the porters themselves, that the landlord who provided them for us took the stipulated sum, and merely allowed them drink-money out of it. I mention this as illustrating the system against which travellers have to be on their guard, and not for the purpose of condemning the Alagna innkeeper, who is really a very civil, respectable man, and presented on our departure only a moderate bill. I find it hard, however, quite to forgive him for having been willing to peril my safety for a paltry pecuniary advantage to himself.

The new mule thus happily secured for me rendered the services of the one brought from Alagna unnecessary; but as he had to be paid for, H— determined to ride the clumsy creature up to the foot of the pass, and so give him and his owner a little wholesome exercise. Accordingly the pack-saddle was ordered to be removed, and a man's saddle substituted. Whilst this was being done I had for the first time the opportunity of having a little chat up stairs with the English lady, who was most energetic in her praises of the man and mule just engaged for me. The name of the man is Antoine Pession, of Val Tournanche; and any one crossing from Zermatt by the Théodule Pass would be most fortunate if they could engage him. The lady had been travelling with him for more than a week, and gave him a most excellent character, which I believe he thoroughly deserved. One peculiarity about Antoine's appearance may be mentioned—he has one of the largest mouths and most formidable set of teeth I ever saw; but a good-natured expression pervades his face, and indicates unmistakeably that he is a good fellow.

Our new arrangements occupied some time, and it was 7 A.M. when we started. I sprang into the saddle with a light heart, for all the misgivings I had felt had vanished, and in the highest spirits I waved an adieu to the kind-hearted English lady, who was watching our departure from the window. On our yesterday's excursion we had gone round the eastern

and northern sides of the Staffelberg. Our route now was up the Val d'Ollen, which is on the southern side of this mountain, and the entrance to it is immediately opposite Alagna. We speedily got clear of the village, and almost at once began the ascent out of the valley, climbing up an excessively steep path with sharp zigzags. I have generally observed that in ascending mountains from a valley, the steepest bits are, first, when you leave the valley, and secondly when you reach the Col or summit. In the interval between these points there is generally some undulation of ground, or at all events a diminution of steepness. In order to get out of the Val Sesia we had to mount a perfect staircase of rocks; and when I think of the extreme abruptness of the ascent, I can scarcely understand how the poor mules managed to get up at all. This terrible climb lasted for about an hour and a quarter; and chilly as we had felt the air when we first rose in the morning, our exertions, assisted by the increasing heat of the sun, speedily made us warm enough. I discovered in a very few minutes that I had in Antoine an experienced and most useful guide, and felt at first quite astonished at the care he was taking of me, so little had recent experience led me to look for anything of the kind on the part of muleteers and donkey-drivers.

Our cavalcade was headed by the three porters. The lazy guide of yesterday, who had of course selected the

lightest load for himself, led the way; then followed our friend Mr. L—, whose rapidity as a pedestrian was so great that he always shot on a-head if he got in front, which he was pretty sure to do before half an hour had elapsed. Next followed Antoine's good mule "Peter," with myself on his back, while Antoine himself kept close at hand to render any assistance that might be required, and whenever the path was wide enough he was always at my side. Then came H—, bestriding the heavy baggage-mule, which he pronounced utterly unsuited for mountain travelling, and from which he was every moment threatening to dismount. Last of all followed the owner of this mule, toiling most reluctantly after us, and appearing to expect that some accident would every moment happen to his valuable animal. This was our order of march at first starting, and the mules managed to accomplish the ascent by scrambling upwards for about twenty paces at a time, when they stopped and panted to get breath; then they gave another rush, and thus got on. Sometimes the spot on which my mule stopped to catch its breath was so small and narrow, that when I heard H—'s mule behind scrambling up in a passion of excitement I really feared that there would be a collision; and I dreaded lest, if the least check were given to the mule, both its rider and itself might fall backwards, in which case nothing could save them from being dashed to pieces in the abyss. At one of these critical moments I heard a

great scuffling behind me, and on looking round I saw H—'s mule plunging and kicking about as if frantic with agony. A large horsefly had taken advantage of its embarrassed position, and fastened upon it with ferocious voracity; and I don't know what would have occurred if the muleteer had not rushed forward and brushed off the tormentor. This little divertissement in the rear-rank had not long passed ere another took place in front. My mule, as I have already explained, proceeded up the steep rocky staircase by a series of rushes or bursts, and on those occasions I felt it necessary to give him his head without any restraint. In one of these bursts he went rather farther than usual, and on turning a zigzag I suddenly saw my mule's head positively projecting over the shoulder of our friend Mr. L—, who was walking in front, and I was in an agony of terror lest he should be knocked down. I could not pull the mule up short, lest we should tumble backwards, but I shouted out to Mr. L—, who sprang on one side like a chamois and escaped all harm. All this was the work of a moment. A few frights like these keep the mental energies in a state of great activity! It became excessively hot as we struggled up the mountain, and the heat increased perceptibly every quarter of an hour. The perspiration streamed down the faces of the porters and guides, and although they were lightly loaded they showed symptoms of distress. Here the good nature of Antoine was unmistakeably displayed;

for, without being requested to do so, he changed employment with one of the porters, and shouldered his load while the porter took charge of "Peter" and myself.

In our ascent up this steep acclivity we passed through some fine woods, and as, from a great height, we looked back into the Val Sesia, we had a lovely view of the church and village of Alagna, and a little lower down we could see those of Riva, at the entrance of the Val Col Dobbia. The Val Sesia is finely wooded at its sides, and the eye naturally follows the course of the river which winds along it. At last, after about an hour and a half, the excessive steepness diminished, and we found ourselves ascending a narrow green valley or glen which leads to the foot of the Col d'Ollen. This affords abundant pasturage for cattle, but as it is hemmed in on each side by lofty bare precipices, from which large loose rocks have rolled down and lie scattered about in all directions, and as the glen is bare of trees, it presents on the whole rather a desolate appearance. Gnifetti is of opinion that the Val d'Ollen exhibits throughout evident traces of ancient glaciers, and that all those hilly and undulated plains, here smooth and verdant, there covered with fragments of rock, are nothing else than old moraines. There was formerly an iron-mine in this Val, but its works have long been abandoned.

We left the Staffelberg on our right hand, and proceeded up the valley in a direction nearly parallel to

the Valle di Bors. According to Gnifetti there is a pass between the Staffelberg and the Gemstein (or Mont Ollen), called the Colle delle Pisse, by which the traveller can easily go from the point where we now stood into the Valle di Bors.* This is confirmed by the maps of Von Welden and Wörl, but the route does not appear marked on Schlagintweit's map. There can be no doubt, however, that Gnifetti's statement may be relied on. This is most important, because the traveller who is pressed for time may, by starting on foot from Alagna at an early hour in the morning, be able in one day to ascend the Pile Alpe and enjoy the magnificent view of Monte Rosa from that place and the ridge above the Châlets of Bors, and then cross the Valle di Bors and pass by this Colle delle Pisse into the Val d'Ollen; he may then ascend the Col, mount the Gemstein, and finally descend to Gressonay. This would be a considerable undertaking for a single day, and the whole journey would have to be accomplished on foot. It would be more than a lady ought to attempt, but I am satisfied that it might be done by a first-rate walker. I should say that it would, from its great variety, prove to be one of the most magnificent walks among the Alps; for the sides and summits of Monte Rosa, as viewed from the Pile Alpe and the Gemstein, are in a direction

* "Nella quale si può facilmente scendere valicando di Colle delle Pisse." (p. 33.)

nearly at right angles to each other, and the views are so totally unlike in character that the variety could not be greater if the traveller were looking at totally different mountains, instead of different aspects of the same chain.

It was 9.5 A.M. when, having traversed the green pasturages of the Val d'Ollen, we arrived at the foot of the Col, where a most precipitous ascent up a stony path commences. Here H— dismissed his mule, expressing himself highly gratified to be on his feet again, and the mule and his owner—a charming pair!—returned to Alagna. I also dismounted, as the path upwards appeared too steep for riding. Antoine was very desirous that I should have ridden up a little higher, but I thought it better not; and when he found that I was firm in my determination to walk, he showed himself so satisfied about his good mule "Peter" having no difficulty in ascending the pass, that he took from one of the porters the carpet-bag, which was the heaviest article of our baggage, and strapped it on the animal's back. "Peter" then climbed up with great cleverness, and without appearing in the least distressed. It took me exactly one hour to walk from the place where I dismounted to the top of the Col, and it was really a severe tug up. After the little incident already mentioned, when Mr. L— was nearly trodden on by my mule at the entrance of the Val, he pushed on farther in advance of the rest of the party, and we occasionally

caught glimpses of him at a distance in front, but at last he entirely disappeared behind a ridge. As he intended to wait for us on the summit of the Gemstein, where the air might prove exceedingly cold, H— became alarmed lest our friend, who was without his coat, should take a chill, and accordingly he sent forward the lazy guide of yesterday to follow him with the coat as quickly as possible. It was well that this was done, for it afterwards turned out that Mr. L— had mistaken the direction of the Col and gone the wrong way, and he might have found himself in a serious difficulty if the guide had not arrived just in time to extricate him and put him once more in the right track. He imagined that the Col was on the right instead of the left side of the Gemstein, and he went straight up the face of the rocks to reach what he erroneously supposed to be our proper destination; but he speedily found himself among untrodden precipices, which afforded what he called "excessively awkward climbing." At one point he had to put down his alpenstock and cling round the corner of a rock by his hands; at last he was able to resume his alpenstock, and he reached a bare open plateau of rock, on which there were numerous gentians and androsaces, and it was here that the guide who had been sent after him ultimately found him, after a good deal of shouting. He was then extricated from his perilous position and conducted safely to the Col, upon which he immediately followed us up the Gemstein. Thus it

happened that we got to the Col before our more rapid fellow-traveller.

The Col d'Ollen is formed by a narrow opening between steep rocks, and we observed a low wall or barrier of masonry, which was constructed there in ancient times, and the origin of which is now unknown. Gnifetti, however, considers it more than probable that it was erected in the calamitous times of the plague, when it was provided with a guard stationed there to stop all passage and communication between the two valleys of Sesia and Gressonay, and to keep the deadly scourge at a distance (p. 22). Certainly its appearance at the present time in such a wild spot is most remarkable, and strikes one with surprise. It was useful, however, in affording a shelter to our porters and mule from the wind, while they rested there during the period of our ascending the Gemstein. This elevated peak is immediately on the right hand of the Col. None of the porters from Alagna seemed very willing to accompany us up it, but were more inclined to sit quietly where they were, and smoke and repose; but Antoine, giving his mule in charge to them, immediately proffered his services, though he had never been up before; and as he had more brains than all the rest put together, we were perfectly satisfied with the assistance he could render. It took us about half an hour to walk from the Col to the summit of the Gemstein, which is a kind of horn rising abruptly above the pass; and

although there is no defined path, we experienced no difficulty in climbing it, or finding the way. The ground over which we had to walk is not broken by jutting crags; it is tolerably smooth, with the exception of a plentiful supply of loose pebbles and stones on the surface. There is no view of Monte Rosa as one goes up the Gemstein, but the eye and mind may be amply gratified by a profusion of the most exquisite deep-blue gentians, mixed with little clumps of miniature androsaces, their delicate enamelled petals peeping out from amidst equally small green leaves, in all the variations of lilac, pink, and white, through which these tiny flowers change after opening.

> "Numberless flowers, such as disdain to live
> In lower regions, and delighted drink
> The clouds before they fall; flowers of all hues
> With their diminutive leaves covered the ground." *

As we approached the summit of the Gemstein my attention was suddenly attracted by another object of interest. On a stone at a little distance I saw a ptarmigan, in that whitish-grey plumage which adapts it so admirably to regions of rock and snow, and, on our approaching nearer, it rose. Scarcely had we gone a few more paces before three others flew away on their rustling wings. H—, who is a keen sportsman, was intensely excited; the birds, he declared, were all within easy shot, and he was loud in expressions of regret that he had not his gun with him. As we

* Rogers's 'Italy,' p. 26.

watched these birds sweeping with deliberate flight to a short distance in the direction of Gressonay, we forgot for a time that a few more steps would bring us in face of one of the most magnificent views in Europe, and imagination transported us for the moment to the breezy hill-sides of beautiful Scotland, where, on a mountain pony, I have so frequently followed H— in his pursuit of grouse. This little distraction to our thoughts from the great business of the day was, however, speedily dispelled; for in five minutes afterwards we reached the rocky summit of the Gemstein, a height about 10,000 feet above the level of the sea, and 6,000 above Alagna. Here a scene of stupendous magnificence burst upon our sight, and called forth exclamations of delight and astonishment. On our right hand were the magnificent summits and gigantic masses of the Vincent Pyramid and Parrot Spitze, two of the noblest peaks of Monte Rosa visible on the Italian side, and on the left there stretched away, in an unbroken line of snow, the elongated ridge and lofty crest of the mighty Lyskamm, whilst beyond that mountain were seen the snowy tops of the Castor and Pollux, and the broad round head of the distant Breithorn. Unfortunately, there were numerous clouds rapidly driven along by the wind, which soon obstructed our view in that direction, and it was only at intervals that the more distant mountains could be distinguished.

In clear weather the Ortler Spitz may be discerned

from the Gemstein; and during the first few minutes of our arrival on the summit, just as the sky was clearest, Antoine pointed out to us Mont Blanc in the far distance; but the whirling mists and vapours speedily hid it from sight. Immediately opposite to us, but separated by a deep ravine, were the enormous glaciers of Monte Rosa and the Lyskamm. From no other point of view, except at Zermatt, did we ever obtain so extensive a survey of the Monte Rosa range. At Macugnaga, and also at Alagna, the prospect, though lofty, is comparatively cramped in breadth, and at each place, only one huge flank of the mountain is seen; but the full sweep of the chain, as it extends for miles and miles, is commanded from Zermatt on the one side and from the Gemstein on the other.

The scene now before us was one of the deepest interest, not only on account of the sublimity of its grand and wild natural features, but because human sympathies are also engaged there; for we looked upon the boundless icefields and almost inaccessible summits where, about forty years ago, when exploits of that kind were rare, Dr. Parrot, Vincent, Zumstein, and Von Welden, in their different ascents, distinguished themselves by their daring efforts in the cause of science. Some of them have written narratives which even now are read with more general interest than ever. These distinguished men were not induced to make their dangerous excursions by the mere spirit of adventure, or by

the desire of enjoying an unrivalled extent of prospect, or by that passionate craving for excitement which is experienced in resolutely overcoming almost insurmountable difficulties; but they were all bent on scientific experiments and discoveries, and worked with a noble desire to extend the bounds of human knowledge. This is a right motive, and it is that which has given, in later days, a just celebrity to the Alpine labours and discoveries of Professor Forbes and the brothers Schlagintweit, and is now inspiring men like Professor Tyndal to undertake the most adventurous expeditions. One rejoices to find that the names of a few of the earliest explorers have been permanently affixed to some of the loftiest peaks of Monte Rosa, to which their perilous labours were directed, and that the Vincent Pyramid, the Parrot Spitze, the Ludwig's Höhe, and the Zumstein Spitze, have become "household words" not only in the mouths of travellers, but also of the natives of the district. Colonel Ludwig Von Welden has been the prime agent in the nomenclature of these peaks, and he seems to have summoned them around him, and conferred on them their titles with as much solemnity as Adam may have assumed when he named the living animals in Paradise. He has distributed the honours with rigorous impartiality, and selected no names but those of men of science. With commendable modesty he has given only his own Christian name to the Ludwig's Höhe, one of the most insignificant of the peaks. Thus we see in

Monte Rosa a kind of Valhalla for scientific explorers of the Alpine summits, where their monuments, whiter than the marbles of Carrara, are enshrined in the midst of a mighty temple of God's own building.

Although the clouds at a distance from us were beginning to increase, the sun still shone brightly and warmly on the Gemstein, and we experienced no sensation of chilliness. We were a little surprised at not finding our friend Mr. L— there, since we had made sure that he would have arrived before ourselves; but we thought it probable that he might have taken the Alagna guide with him, and descended from the Gemstein upon the glacier below. Accordingly we carefully reconnoitred the glacier with our glass, in the full expectation of seeing him upon it, but became rather uneasy at finding he was nowhere visible. There was a narrow foot-track, something like a sheep-walk, which led from the Gemstein to the glacier, but no trace appeared of his having gone that way. It is remarkable that there should be any track at all in such a place, but gold has been discovered in that remote region, and mines were formerly worked under the very glacier, though now abandoned. While still anxiously speculating as to what could have become of Mr. L—, we heard his voice hailing us from behind, and in another minute or two he was with us on the summit. We then heard of the difficulties he had got into by mistaking his way, and that the Alagna guide had at

last found him out, led him to the top of the Col, and showed him the way up the Geinstein, but had himself remained with the porters below. When we told him of the ptarmigans we had seen, we learned that he had been even more fortunate in that respect than ourselves, for he had in his wanderings put up three brace and a-half, and it is not unlikely that the birds we saw were some which he had originally disturbed. Mr. L— fully participated in the enthusiasm which the magnificent scene had excited in us, but the clouds were every minute gathering more closely around, and hiding some of the finer features of the view, until they began to reach even the Parrot Spitze, and threaten an approach to the Gemstein itself. Not wishing to be enveloped there in mists, we began at 1.15 P.M. to descend.

It is about a four hours' walk from the Gemstein to Gressonay, and as we had plenty of time, we would willingly have stayed another hour on the summit if the weather had not appeared so threatening. As I came down the Gemstein my attention was again attracted by the beauty and profusion of the wild flowers, and at one place I went on my knees to make a nearer inspection of a rich patch of gentians, whose exquisite blue colour had completely fascinated me; but just as I was quietly filling a corner of my shawl with the spoils carefully culled as mementoes of the place (they are now stowed away among my choicest treasures), Antoine came running up in great alarm, thinking I

had had a tumble, but when he found what my occupation was, he assisted me to gather some more. When we got down to the Col we found the mule snugly ensconced in the place where Antoine had stationed him, and I doubt whether he had moved a single step since we had left him. Our porters had been equally tranquil. We also sheltered ourselves for a short time beneath the wall, and enjoyed an excellent repast with true mountain appetites. We then began our descent in the direction of the green Alps of Gabiet Indren; the road soon became less steep than on the other side, and there was abundance of grass for pasturage. Our attention was now attracted by the peculiar character of the rocks over which we were travelling: they are of green serpentine, and would be of great value if it were not for the cost of carriage. They have on the outside, where they are weather-stained, a brownish rusty hue, but are of the most decided green where freshly broken, and the smooth pebbles in every brook you step across are of the same beautiful colour. This character of rock continues all the way down to Gressonay, and there was something about it, to myself, extremely novel and interesting in its appearance.

We had not left the Col d'Ollen more than half an hour when a few drops of rain began to fall; but we paid very little attention to them at first, thinking there would be no more than a shower. On our left hand, as we went down, was a lofty range of mountains formed

by the Monte d'Otro and Monte Scarpietta, which exactly intervened between us and Alagna, and round which we had been describing a kind of half circle. The rain presently began to fall a little more heavily, and was accompanied by a loud clap of thunder. We saw some châlets a short distance off, and scampered there as quickly as we could. We found the châlets all deserted and the doors fastened, with the exception of the cow-house, which was far too uninviting for me to enter, though the porters gladly took refuge there. We sat down on a door step where the projecting roof kept us tolerably dry, though the rain now fell in right good earnest. When its violence had a little abated, the general opinion was, that as we still had a considerable distance to go, we had better take advantage of the lull and make our way to Gressonay as fast as possible. We again started, but the rain soon came down again with redoubled fury, and was blown by the violence of the wind directly into our faces. This mode of having one's face washed was not agreeable, particularly as the operation was very protracted, and the water icy cold. My face was perfectly dripping with rain drops, for more than an hour. A lady when caught in a storm of rain on a mountain has certainly great difficulties to encounter; the water streamed from my macintosh cape on to my dress, which became every moment heavier as it was more completely saturated, my feet were cold and wet, and my cloak fluttered in the breeze,

but I struggled forwards as well as I could through the wind and rain. Just then I overtook one of the porters whose load, not a very heavy one, included a reserve coat of H—'s and my two shawls, which had been carefully wrapped up in a spare macintosh to keep them dry. With some surprise I saw the bright fringe of one of my shawls dangling from the man's basket, and, supposing that it had escaped from the macintosh, I persuaded H— to run forward and stop the porter, and protect the things he was carrying better from the rain. But when I came up to see what was the matter, I found that the macintosh had been taken off altogether, and the shawls left totally exposed to the shower, and would in a few minutes have become perfectly wet through. On requiring an explanation, I found that our lazy Alagna guide of yesterday had very coolly stopped the porter, emptied out the shawls loose into his basket, and wrapped himself up in the macintosh, under the impulse of that strong desire for personal comfort which distinguished him! He was now walking behind out of sight, but looked rather sheepish when he was compelled to come forward and resign his prize, and receive a scolding. The macintosh was taken from him and put round the shoulders of the porter, in such a manner as to cover not only himself, but the basket and its contents, so as to keep all dry; and he seemed highly delighted at an arrangement which protected him so effectually. The Alagna guide had our umbrella given

him, under which he went cowering along through the storm, looking as uncomfortable as a cat in a shower. We then trudged on again as fast as we could, admiring at one time the beautiful green of the serpentine rocks, the colour of which was brought out vividly by the wet, and then complaining of their extreme slipperiness, which rendered them very embarrassing to persons in a hurry.

Mr. Ruskin has most truthfully explained that peculiar effect of rain on a landscape which now excited our attention. He refers with commendation to Madame de Genlis' criticisms on Nicolo Poussin's picture of the 'Deluge,' where she complains of the exactitude with which the landscape is portrayed in all its details, and observes that the dusky atmosphere, in rain, obscures all objects, making them, if distant, either wholly disappear or be seen with difficulty. He then adds:—

"It is true that the dusky atmosphere 'obscures all objects,' but it is also true that Nature, never intending the eye of man to be without delight, has provided a rich compensation for this shading of the tints with *darkness*, in their brightening by *moisture*. Every colour, wet, is twice as brilliant as it is when dry; and when distances are obscured by mist, and bright colours vanish from the sky, and gleams of sunshine from the earth, the foreground assumes all the loveliest hues, the grass and foliage revive into their perfect green, and every sunburnt rock glows into an agate. The colours of mountain foregrounds can never be seen in perfection unless they *are* wet; nor *can* moisture be entirely expressed except by fulness of colour." *

As we got deeper into the valley, we became more sheltered from the storm, and we saw below us, on our

* Ruskin's 'Modern Painters,' vol. iv. chap. 16, p. 251.

right hand, the great Glacier of the Lyskamm, which projects forward in a long narrow mass to an immense distance in the Val de Lys. Shortly afterwards we traversed a large extent of rich and verdant pastures, and about a quarter of an hour before we reached Gressonay la Trinitá, we stopped to dispose of a bottle of vino d'Asti which had been kept in reserve, and each drank a glass with much satisfaction, as we stood protected from the rain under the friendly shelter of the jutting roof of a châlet; the bottle was then handed to the porters to finish, a task which they willingly accomplished in a very few instants. Inspirited by a refreshing draught of this sparkling beverage, we again started with renewed vigour, Mr. L— going forwards as fast as possible to secure rooms, and leaving H— and myself to follow with the porters and baggage. When we got to La Trinitá we found an excellent horse-path leading down the valley to Gressonay St. Jean, and as we had still an hour's journey before us, Antoine was most urgent that I should again mount the mule. I was unwilling to do so, although I had had quite walking enough, for as my feet were wet, I feared taking cold. I yielded, however, to Antoine's solicitations, and again mounted the mule; but my feet soon became like ice. As we approached Noversch we met a gentleman who was ascending the valley; he proved to be the Baron Peccoz, who is celebrated as one of the most successful and daring chamois hunters in the dis-

trict, and a first rate mountaineer. He has a house at Gressonay St. Jean, and a hunting lodge at Am Betts, at the very foot of the Lys Glacier, whither he was now proceeding. He has another residence at Pont St. Martin, at the lower end of the Val de Lys, where it joins the Valley of Aosta. None of these residences are of any great magnitude, nor is any unwieldy establishment of domestics kept. Indeed, the Baron, on the occasion of his present temporary migration from Gressonay to Am Betts, had locked up his house at the former place, and put the key in his pocket. This great simplicity of his domestic arrangements prevented us, on the following morning, from seeing the Baron's collection of trophies of the chase and specimens of natural history, which is one of the lions of Gressonay, and is always, I believe, liberally shown to strangers, whenever there is any one within to do the honours of the house. The Baron is reputed to be the richest man in the district, and is said to have made his fortune by commercial pursuits in Bavaria. He recognised one of our porters, and stopped him to make inquiries as to how we had got over the Col d'Ollen, with the mule which he saw me riding. When the porter rejoined the party a very amusing conversation took place between him and his comrades, in which they endeavoured to make calculations for our enlightenment as to the extent of the Baron's wealth. Between La Trinitá and Gressonay St. Jean we passed numerous excellent houses built in

the Swiss style. They are the residences of wealthy persons, who, having made their fortunes in foreign countries, have returned to their native valley. The population of the Val de Lys is almost exclusively German.

It was 5.45 P.M. when we reached Gressonay St. Jean. The rain had ceased for nearly an hour, but our clothes were still heavy with moisture. We hurried through the village, which is not a very interesting place, and crossed the bridge over the river which led us to some beautiful bright green meadows, in the midst of which stands the "Pension de la Pierre," to which our steps were directed. Mr. L— had arrived nearly half an hour before, and had ordered everything that we could require. De la Pierre came out to receive us, and we soon discovered that though his house has a very unpretending exterior, it was thoroughly comfortable and clean within. We speedily changed our clothes and found our way into the *salle-à-manger*, where an excellent dinner was provided for us. De la Pierre prides himself on the excellence of his cuisine and the cleanliness of his rooms, and he seems to consider no trouble too great if it contributes to the comfort of his guests. His family have lived in the Valley of Gressonay about 400 years, and he is related to the celebrated Zumstein. The latter has retained the German form of the family name. De la Pierre's wife, sister, and younger son Ferdinand, assist him in the domestic arrangements of the hotel;

but his great pride seems to be his Italian cook, who, he says, can provide a dinner to please the taste of visitors of all nations. If an English party arrives, a dinner is sent up to suit the taste of the English, whom he is most solicitous to please; if they are French, then a dinner is served in the French style of cookery; if they are Piedmontese, then the genuine Italian cookery is provided. He told us that Mr. King had taught him how to arrange an icehouse in which he could preserve meat, game, and other delicacies for a long time, and thus, though living in so wild a district, he is never found unprovided. De la Pierre forms a remarkable contrast to most of the other hotel-keepers in Piedmont; for nothing can exceed his extreme solicitude to do everything in his power to supply the wants of tourists, and provide them with everything necessary for mountain excursions. He always has mules for the use of travellers, and has a supply of side-saddles. One instance will illustrate to what extent he will give himself trouble. He had heard from the Viennese gentleman whom we had met at Alagna that we intended to come to his hotel, and knowing that there was no side-saddle at Alagna, he immediately sent over to Alagna (by the Col Dobbia) a man with a mule and side-saddle for my use. His messenger, however, did not reach Alagna until just after we had left. His *salle-à-manger* is a very pleasant room, and as we sat round a crackling wood fire in the

evening we felt thoroughly comfortable. It must be remembered that Gressonay is higher above the level of the sea than the top of Ben Nevis, and therefore when the weather is bad, a fire is very cheering even in September.

Sept. 13.—This was a warm wet day, and the rain fell steadily until three in the afternoon. The gentlemen, accompanied by De la Pierre, walked to Noversch, and called on the veteran Zumstein, who is now about 76 years old. When my friends knocked at his door, there was no one in the house; he was away, and he had, according to the custom of the country, the key of the door in his pocket. De la Pierre, however, made search for him, and after a short delay he made his appearance. He was described to me as a little old man wearing a wide-awake hat, and grey corduroy coat and waistcoat, all rather the worse for wear; he had no moustache, but his chin was fringed with a thin, short white beard; his cheek looked still fresh and ruddy, and his eyes bright and keen, though one of them had a decided cast in it. He was invited to dine with us, but declined on account of the bad state of the weather, which rendered him unwilling to encounter the night air. The old gentleman spoke German, which is the prevailing language in this valley. My friends informed him that they had some idea of paying a visit to the Pic de Grivola, and had hopes, when there, of meeting with the ibex or bouquetin—that rare animal which has now become

nearly extinct among the Alps, but is still to be found at Cogne. Herr Zumstein, who seemed to divine that he was conversing with persons of the sportsman class, took great pains to inform them that, by the law of Sardinia, there is a strict prohibition against killing this animal; and that he was the person at whose instance the law had been passed, nearly half a century ago.

While the gentlemen were engaged in this excursion, I employed myself for a long time in nursing a beautiful tortoiseshell butterfly, which was evidently suffering from the cold, but which seemed to revive when I put it in every little gleam of sunshine that made its appearance. There is a glass door which opens from the *salle-à-manger* into the meadow, and a fine goat, who seemed perfectly acquainted with the premises, finding this door open, popped in his head and took a survey round; presently I heard its hoofs going tap-tap on the floor, and looking round I found that his lordship was already at my elbow and had come to share with the butterfly such favours as I could bestow. I gave him a piece of bread, with which he made off, but its flavour was so highly approved that I soon had a second visit, and at last was obliged to drive my importunate friend out of the room. When I found that the rain had decidedly ceased and that the sun was shining, I walked up the valley towards La Trinitá, and met the gentlemen as they were returning. There is a pretty little chapel on a small eminence above Gressonay, which

G.HARNARD. DEL.ᵗ

M & N HANHART. LITH.

THE LYSKAMM.

commands a most beautiful view down the valley. At a point a little above this, is a small picturesque bridge which spans the river by a single arch, and the buttresses rest on precipitous rocks which nearly meet, but between them the torrent forces its way. At a distance, in the background, is seen the majestic snow-crowned head of the Lyskamm, which blocks up the end of the valley, and is said never yet to have been ascended. On the left hand rise the rocky precipices of the Grauhaupt. Mr. George Barnard has chosen the view from this spot as the subject of one of his beautiful drawings.

I announced to De la Pierre the welcome intelligence that a party of visitors had just arrived at his hotel, consisting of a stout old gentleman, a young lady wearing an enormous hat, another gentleman, and a curé. When I mentioned the curé, De la Pierre's countenance showed a little disappointment, and he exclaimed, "Oh! then they are only people of the country." They proved, however, to be of more importance than he expected; for one was a judge from Turin, having, as De la Pierre described it, the power of life and death, and the young lady was his daughter. He was accompanied by his secretary, and the curé was the clergyman of the district, who had come to pay his respects. They were a very merry party, and made noise enough in the *salle-à-manger* for a dozen people. De la Pierre afterwards remarked to me how little noise the English make compared to the Piedmontese. The English,

he said, always appear to be occupied in doing something. They are either reading, writing, drawing, or arranging their botanical or geological specimens; whilst the Piedmontese idle away their time in talking, smoking, and making a noise, and rarely appear to apply themselves to anything more serious. A party of Piedmontese, he said, will sometimes arrive from Turin dressed in the most ornamental style of costume, but with boots of *verni* leather quite unsuited to the mountains, and they will bring with them such huge piles of luggage, that one would imagine they were going to make a stay of a month or two at the least; but a couple of days generally satisfies them with mountain scenery, and back they return to Turin.

We had a great deal of conversation with De la Pierre to-day about our future movements. We were anxious to visit the Lys Glacier, and to ascend the Roth-horn or Grauhaupt; but De la Pierre was full of the excursion which he had made a few years before with Mr. and Mrs. King to Cogne and the Pic de Grivola. The interesting account given in Mr. King's book* of the ascent of La Grivola was quite sufficient to inspire us with the wish to go there. De la Pierre warmed up at the very thoughts of it, and eagerly tendered his services as guide. As the season was now far advanced, it was considered that if we went on this expedition we ought to start at once; but

* 'The Italian Valleys of the Pennine Alps.'

it was not without regret that we consented to leave Gressonay so soon, and without having explored the upper part of the valley.

There are two routes by which travellers can proceed from Gressonay to Cogne. The first is that which was taken by Mr. King; by this route the traveller descends the valley of Gressonay to the Pont St. Martin, where the Lys falls into the Dora Baltea or Doire, and then, following that river for a short distance up to Fort Bard, he can proceed to Cogne by a little frequented path to the westward, along the Val Champorcher, which runs nearly parallel to part of the Val d'Aosta. The other route is that we selected, namely, by crossing the Col de Ranzola and the Col de Jon to St. Vincent, and then proceeding along the Val d'Aosta to the point where, a few miles beyond the city of Aosta, the Doire is crossed and the path up the Val de Cogne ascended. We determined to follow this latter route, as it affords excellent hotel accommodation by the way, and is also, I believe, the more beautiful. Every preparation was made this evening for our journey, which was to commence on the following morning if the weather were favourable. De la Pierre seemed to consider that we might go in one day from Gressonay to Aosta; but we found, on trial, that it was more than we could conveniently accomplish.

CHAPTER XV.

FROM GRESSONAY TO AOSTA BY THE COL DE RANZOLA AND THE COL DE JON.

Departure from Gressonay — The discontented mule — The Col de Ranzola — A steep mountain-climb — The Pointe de Combetta — View from the Col — A far-distant glacier — Descent to Brussone — The Val Challant — The path up the Col de Jon — An "al-fresco" lunch — The lost packet — A testimony to Italian honesty — Summit of the Col de Jon — Descent to St. Vincent — Road to Châtillon — The "Palais Royal" Hotel — The valley of Aosta — Great heat — The vintage — Aosta — Goître and crétinism — The "Hôtel du Mont Blanc" — Roman antiquities — Preparations for the journey to Cogne — The Abbé Cavagnet — English friends.

Sept. 14.—This was a most magnificent morning. The rain had thoroughly cleared the sky, and the first rays of sunlight which touched the mountain tops found them quite free from clouds. We rose at 5 A.M., and started at 7.15 A.M. I had a nice little pony named "Nina" to ride, and our baggage was packed on a mule. Nothing could be more willing or gentle than the little pony, and she was a perfectly experienced climber; the mule, however, was an ugly, ungainly animal, that appeared from the very first thoroughly dissatisfied with his work, and would sometimes express his discontent with such an audible series of gruntings, snortings, and groanings, that he could not properly be described as a

dumb animal. He had some reason to complain, for I discovered, after we had started, that he had only three shoes, and I remonstrated with De la Pierre, who excused himself by saying that shoes for mules did not matter, and that they would often go without a shoe or two for a month; but as I was not satisfied, he promised to get the animal properly shod at the first place we came to. A man accompanied us with the mule as far as the summit of the Col de Ranzola, when he left us and returned. We had some suspicion that the mule belonged to him, and not to De la Pierre. I have reason to believe that even at Gressonay travellers who require mules are not always supplied with good ones, although De la Pierre may himself provide them. His famous mule "Mora," which carried Mrs. King so gallantly, was for some reason not forthcoming. There was a long delay before we started, so many things had to be packed, and De la Pierre's arrangements with respect to the commissariat department required a good deal of time, as we had to take all kinds of provisions with us to Cogne. We strolled out along the path which leads across the beautiful meadows that surround the hotel, and looking up the valley we had a most magnificent view of part of the Lyskamm and of the Glacier below it. All was shining in the brightest sunshine with a hue like silver, and our spirits were highly exhilarated by the prospect of a journey in fine weather. Everything at last being ready, I mounted "Nina," the whole esta-

blishment as usual coming out to see the start. We went a short distance down the valley until we came to a steep and narrow ravine on our right hand, up which we had to go to the Col de Ranzola. Nearly opposite, on the left hand, is the entrance to the valley which leads to the Col Dobbia. Just before we arrived at the mouth of the ravine, where we turn towards the Col de Ranzola, De la Pierre pointed to a narrow path which he said would be shorter, and afford more agreeable walking for Mr. L— and H—, than if they were to follow the stony mule-path; but he was rather too brief in his explanations, and did not inform them that the *détour* they were to make was only to be one of five minutes, and they understood him to mean that they were to ascend the ravine on the right or northern side of the pass. This was quite a mistake, and occasioned a good deal of delay and anxiety; for my companions finding a well-defined path which led up the right side of the ravine naturally continued to follow it, and found themselves at last on the face of such a steep acclivity, that it was with the utmost difficulty they could scale it, even when they availed themselves of the stems and branches of the trees. They persevered, however, and the path led them finally to a wood-cutter's shed where no one was at work. They managed after a tremendous climb to reach the top of the ravine, and then walking along a bare ridge, too precipitous for trees to grow on its side, they reached the summit of the Col. In the meantime

De la Pierre conducted me up the narrow mule-path on the left or southern side of the ravine. He was a little surprised at seeing nothing of my companions; but I told him they were excellent walkers, and had no doubt gone on, for it never occurred to me that they had mistaken the route. I was so well aware that their pace was faster than that of little "Nina," that, making sure they were on before, I was quite at my ease respecting them. It was never supposed by any one that they were toiling up the almost inaccessible face of the northern side of the ravine.

Little "Nina" carried me very nicely, and seemed perfectly acquainted with the route we were taking. It passed through a beautiful forest, where several men were busily engaged in cutting down timber; and we had, all the way up, a series of the most lovely views of the Monte Rosa chain, beginning with the Lyskamm, and then, towards the east, the Vincent Pyramid and Signal Kuppe gradually came into sight. De la Pierre, who was quite enchanted at the thoughts of the expedition before us, was full of conversation, and seemed never to tire when he spoke of the journey he had taken with Mr. and Mrs. King, and of the variety and extent of Mr. King's scientific knowledge, and the cleverness and courage of his wife. He was also very communicative about his own affairs. The subject most on his mind appeared to be that his eldest son, who was an excellent guide, had lately left his native village and

gone to America to seek his fortune. The father had opposed it as much as he could, but to no purpose. His second son, Ferdinand, acts as waiter at the hotel; and it is intended that he shall visit England to learn our language; for De la Pierre seems impressed with the notion that it is by the patronage of the English that his hotel must be made to succeed, and he uses every means in his power to obtain that patronage.

On reaching the summit of the Col de Ranzola we were astonished to find that the gentlemen were not there. We looked into the little house of refuge which is built on the top of the pass, but there was no one in it. We saw a shepherd who appeared to be coming across the pass from Brussone, but on inquiry we learned that he had seen nothing of my friends. The mountain called the Combetta rises immediately above the Col de Ranzola, just as the Gemstein rises above the Col d'Ollen; and from the top of the Combetta there is a magnificent view, which must far excel that obtained from the Col. We thought for a short time that the gentlemen had gone up the Combetta, but we saw no trace of them, nor was there any reply to the Swiss cry with which we sought to gain their attention. We then became a little alarmed, and sent the muleteer to search for the lost wanderers. He had not been gone more than four or five minutes before they reached the Col, and great indeed was the relief which I experienced when, just at 10 A.M., I saw first the tops of their alpenstocks, and

then their heads, rising up from the ravine and approaching us.

There is no view of the Monte Rosa chain from the summit of the Col, but on looking towards the west we had an excellent view of Mont Blanc in the far distance; and in the space between it and the point where we stood was a great variety of mountain scenery glowing in the most brilliant sunshine, with the softest veil of blue tint spread over the higher summits; while in the Valley of Aosta, which was separated from us by the Val de Challant and the Col de Jon, we could distinguish the white buildings of Châtillon, and the still more distant city of Aosta itself. We were not, however, permitted to enjoy the view of Mont Blanc very long, for envious clouds gathered around and hid it from our sight. We were still under the impression that we should be able to reach the city of Aosta before dark, notwithstanding that we had lost more than half an hour by the gentlemen missing their way. We therefore deprived ourselves, but to no useful purpose as it afterwards proved, of the opportunity of ascending the Pointe de Combetta. This appears to rise with a very gradual slope above the Col, and was now completely clothed on one side with richly red-tinted leaves of the bilberry, which gave it almost as much colour as is to be seen on the heather-covered hills of Scotland. One great charm of the view from the Pointe de Combetta, which made us greatly regret not having ascended

it, is that it commands a view both of Monte Rosa and Mont Blanc, and also of the Graian Alps, which form the southern boundary of the Valley of Aosta, and to which, with the celebrated Pic de Grivola, our steps were now directed. I should imagine that there are few places from which, in clear weather, a more magnificent panorama can be seen than from the Pointe de Combetta, and no person who visits Gressonay ought to omit going there.

But even from the lower level of the Col de Ranzola the view which we obtained of mountain and valley was most varied and extensive. When we looked across the Val de Gressonay, out of which we had just emerged, we could distinguish plainly the little hospice on the top of the Col Dobbia, which is merely a house of refuge consisting of one room. In that direction, and also towards the south, where the Pointe de Combetta intercepts the view, the prospect is limited; but towards the west and south-west it is most extensive, and our view up the Val d'Aosta alone must have reached about fifty miles. At the farther extremity, but at a considerable height above the valley, hung something which looked like a small bright cloud; and we had a long discussion as to whether it was cloud or glacier. Our doubts on the subject were not quite removed until a later period of the day, when we saw it again from the Col de Jon, and discovered that it really was the enormous and almost unexplored Glacier of the Ruitor, which from

its great elevation seemed as if suspended in the sky. The principal characteristic of the scenery consists in a series of mountain ranges, one behind another, which is nowhere to be met with so frequently as in the Alps of Piedmont. While busily engaged in viewing the prospect, we found that we also were objects of great attention to several red-legged crows or choughs which were strutting about close by, and examining us with great curiosity, occasionally cawing loudly at what they seemed to consider an intrusion on their domain. They are of much slighter and more elegant build than the common rook.

We had a beautiful walk down the mountain to Brussone in the Val Challant. The upper part of this valley has a bare, uninteresting look, but it is beautifully wooded in the vicinity of Brussone. We came occasionally to places where the turf was so green, smooth, and inviting, that it would have been delightful to pass a whole day there; and it was impossible, without some feeling of reluctance, to leave so delightful a region and dive into the hot atmosphere of the deep valley. The baggage-mule was quite of our opinion. At one spot more than usually inviting he made a desperate attempt to lie down for the purpose of taking a roll, and would certainly have done so, to the infinite damage of our goods and chattels, if De la Pierre had not prevented him by the vigorous application of a stick. The mule's head was then tied up in a most uncomfortable fashion,

so as to prevent him from stretching it out in order to lie down; but this treatment elicited from him a running fire of indignant ejaculations that never ceased till we got to Brussone.

We arrived at Brussone, in the Val Challant, about 12.30 P.M. The air was so stifling in the valley that we felt an irresistible desire to get out of it as fast as we could. There is a little homely inn in the village, but we did not enter it. We saw before us the beautiful wooded mountain up which lay our path to the Col de Jon, and we were unanimous in the desire to proceed there at once, and escape into a lighter and more refreshing atmosphere. We therefore went straight across the Val de Challant, and began to ascend the opposite side. I had walked down from the Col de Ranzola to Brussone, but I now remounted "Nina" and rode to the summit of the Col de Jon. The path up is quite unlike any that I had before met with in the Alps. Instead of being strewn over with large loose stones, or winding up among difficult ledges of rock, it is for the most part a moderate slope carpeted with the most beautiful grass and shaded by overhanging trees, so that the character of the pass resembles that of park scenery. Just before reaching the summit, we went through an avenue of trees with rich green turf between them, forming a delightful glade. De la Pierre then led us to a spot where there was a spring of water, and we had our lunch "al fresco" with much more enjoyment than if

we had made our mid-day halt in the village of Brussone. Just as we were making ourselves comfortable, Mr. L— discovered, to his consternation, that he had left on a stone near Brussone, where he seated himself while I mounted "Nina," a little book containing some botanical specimens, a geological map, and a note-book. These articles were fastened together in a small packet with India-rubber bands, and as they were in constant use their loss would have caused considerable inconvenience. We had, however, no inclination to go back to Brussone in search of them. Among a party of woodcutters at work not far off, De la Pierre found a boy who undertook to go to Brussone to recover the packet. A franc was paid him for going, and the promise was given that whoever would bring the packet to the hotel at Châtillon should receive another franc. When we suggested to De la Pierre that the reward promised was a great deal too small, he insisted that it was not. "These people," said he, "are merely peasants, and what can they want? of what use is money to people like these?" This was not very conclusive reasoning, but the boy certainly appeared to think himself in excellent luck, and he started in the highest spirits for Brussone, accompanied by a dog with whom we had already made acquaintance, from the fact of his having scented out our provisions, and volunteered his assistance in the disposal of them. The packet was afterwards brought to us at Aosta, to which place it had been for-

warded from Châtillon, and the promised sum of one franc only was demanded. It did not appear to have been opened; and my belief is that if it had contained bank-notes instead of dried flowers, it would have been returned with equal honesty.

The place where we sat on the Col de Jon was excellently sheltered, and nothing could be more delightful than the temperature. If the Italian valleys are excessively hot, the mountain summits, at all events, have the advantage of being much more endurable than is generally the case in Switzerland, where the cold is often so intense at any moderate elevation that the first wish the traveller has when he gets there is to hurry down again to a warmer atmosphere, and thus avoid being frozen. In this warm and genial spot I found an enormous ant-hill, formed, as they generally are in these mountain regions, of the spines or needles of the fir, and swarming with insect life. I scattered a few bread-crumbs amongst them, to their great satisfaction, and whole tribes were soon vigorously engaged in carrying them off. The view from the summit of the Col de Jon is not quite so extensive as that from the Col de Ranzola, but it commands a nearer and clearer view of the Val d'Aosta and of the mountains which bound it on either side. Two of the most remarkable summits are those of Monte Emilius, and the Becca de Nona, or Pic de Onze Heures, which tower aloft in the sky, immediately opposite the city of Aosta. They pro-

ject upwards like great wedges of rock, and both are celebrated for the wonderful view to be obtained from them; they are themselves most picturesque objects, whether viewed from the Col de Jon, from the valley of Aosta, or from the opposite heights of the Great St. Bernard.

Monte Emilius and Becca de Nona.

The pretty town and watering place of St. Vincent is in the valley of Aosta, exactly at the foot of the Col de Jon, and the descent to it is extremely steep, with numerous zig-zags, but the stony pathway, which looks like the dry bed of a torrent, is generally well shaded with trees. Shortly before reaching St. Vincent we left the larches and firs, and found ourselves once again

beneath the more luxuriant foliage of the chestnut and walnut, whilst the little green lizards also made their appearance, and on our approach darted swiftly from stone to stone. There are some mineral springs at St. Vincent, and we went into a large rough building, something like a huge barn in appearance, where the waters are supplied to persons who have faith in them. We tasted them from curiosity, but the wry faces made by one of my companions indicated no relish for their flavour. There is an excellent road between St. Vincent and Châtillon, but we unwillingly exchanged the rough stony paths of the mountains for this smooth but hot and dusty road of the valley. This highway had, however, attractions of its own, for in the hedges on each side the jasmine grew luxuriantly, and the grapes hung in clusters from the festooned vines. We met numerous mules and donkeys laden with the rich produce of the vintage, each carrying panniers heaped up with grapes, or else a couple of large skins, full of the fresh juice which had been pressed out at the vineyard, and was being carried to the town to be fermented and made into wine.

"Among the hills 'tis now
The hey-day of the vintage; all abroad,
But most the young, and of the gentler sex,
Busy in gathering; all among the vines,
Some on the ladder, and some underneath,
Filling their baskets of green wickerwork,
While many a canzonet and frolic laugh
Come through the leaves; the vines in light festoons
From tree to tree, the trees in avenues,

> And every avenue a covered walk
> Hung with black clusters. 'Tis enough to make
> The sad man merry, the benevolent one
> Melt into tears—so general is the joy!
> While up and down the cliffs, over the lake,
> Wains, oxen drawn, and panniered mules are seen
> Laden with grapes and dropping rosy wine."*

It was 5 P.M. when we reached Châtillon, which is a town of considerable size. It was formerly the horror of travellers on account of the badness of its inn, but a new hotel called the "Palais Royal" has lately been opened, and is well placed at the extremity of the town, where a lofty bridge spans the deep and beautiful ravine of the Tournanche. We found it good and reasonable. We had intended to drive on to Aosta the same evening, but were unable to procure a carriage with two horses, and as I was quite sufficiently tired with my day's journey, and none of us were disposed to travel in the dark, we finally determined to avail ourselves of the comfortable quarters of the "Palais Royal," and we found no reason to regret having done so. Our old guide, Antoine Pession, who had conducted us from Alagna over the Col d'Ollen, was in the courtyard of the hotel, and gladly recognised us. He was looking out for an engagement, and tried to persuade us to ascend the Val Tournanche and cross the Théodule under his guidance. There is no one whom I would more willingly have selected for such a purpose, but we

* Rogers's 'Italy.'

were bent on another expedition, and could only decline the offers which he made with so much civility.

Sept. 15.—A feeling of languor and disinclination to active exertion, confessed to by all of us this morning, reminded us that we were in the sultry valley of Aosta. As the day's excursion was to be confined to a drive along the carriage-road to the city of Aosta, we did not think it necessary to hurry ourselves in starting, and it was 10 A.M. before we left Châtillon. The gentlemen strolled across the bridge over the Doire, and through the rich meadows which lead towards the picturesque Château d'Usselle. In order to cross the Doire it is necessary to descend a considerable declivity; in fact, as you stand on the lofty bridge which crosses the Tournanche, near the point where it falls, almost at right angles, into the Doire, the latter river is at a great distance below. On the right hand there is a prodigious mound of alluvial deposit brought down by the Doire, through which the torrent of the Tournanche has forced itself, and completely swept away all vestige of the mound below Châtillon. The rest of the mound is left to fill up the valley above Châtillon, and presents the appearance of an artificial embankment; as this is one of the peculiarities of the place it ought not to pass unobserved. Below the new bridge two others may be seen; one of them a genuine Roman bridge, and the other a more modern structure, which has now been superseded by the new bridge.

We left De la Pierre at Châtillon to follow with "Nina" and the mule, and set off in a carriage for Aosta; but the rays of the sun were so intense that we suffered more from the heat during this journey than on any previous occasion, although a beautiful light breeze met and fanned us as we went along. I was obliged to have the hood of the carriage up in order to protect me from the fierce sunshine, notwithstanding that I was very loth to do anything which could at all impede the current of air. The gentleman who sat on the box was obliged to unfurl a huge umbrella to protect himself from a *coup de soleil*. As for walking along such a valley as this, it would be almost impossible in the middle of the day, unless one's powers of endurance were very great. The inhabitants were, however, busily engaged in the operations of the vintage, and numerous loads of rich black grapes passed us. We were again much amused at the droll appearance which the skins, full of grape-juice, presented when, as they were carried along, they swung to and fro with the legs distended by the juice sticking up in the air, all being deeply stained with the purple fluid. We met a man who, in addition to the load of grapes on his back, carried in his hand a small wicker-basket containing some of the choicest bunches, which had evidently been culled for the table. We stopped him to bargain for a few, and for a very small coin he supplied each of us with a magnificent bunch, and then handed his basket to the

driver, giving him liberty to help himself to as many as he pleased. Nothing could be more refreshing to our parched and feverish mouths than these well-ripened grapes.

After a three-hours' drive we arrived at Aosta; but the admiration inspired by the beautiful scenery of the valley was speedily dissipated when we saw in the streets of this city so many wretched objects of our own species disfigured by the disgusting goître or sunk into irreclaimable crétinism. The latter poor creatures appear to live by mendicancy, but to persons unaccustomed to see them their near approach excites such a shudder of horror that even compassion is momentarily forgotten in the desire to escape from them. We drove rapidly through the city to its western extremity, where Jean Tairraz, the Chamounix guide, has built his new "Hôtel du Mont Blanc." The circumstance that the hotel is built just on the outskirts of the city, and at a distance from the Place Charles Albert, which is the head-quarters of those afflicted with goître and crétinism, renders it a more agreeable place of sojourn for travellers. An open gallery, into which the rooms open, runs round the court-yard; all feeling of closeness is thus avoided, and one has the advantage of enjoying the fresh air. The hotel is kept scrupulously clean, and although the charges are higher than usual in Piedmont, and the *cuisine* is of a very primitive kind, the hotel may be

strongly recommended. The "Ecu du Valais," where we had stayed on former occasions, has been removed from the Town Hall to a large and commodious building near the Post Office; and if it is kept by the same respectable people to whom the former establishment belonged, there can be no doubt that travellers who go there will be satisfied. On arriving at our hotel we thought that the best mode of employing the time during the heat of the day was to dine. This enabled us to spend the evening, when it became cooler, in rambling about the city and examining the Roman antiquities, which, though of very inferior interest to those at Trèves or Nismes, deserve a visit from the antiquary. The things best worth notice are the Triumphal Arch of the Emperor Augustus, and the massive masonry of the Porte de la Trinité. We endeavoured to explore these antiquities more from a feeling of duty than delight, for the heat greatly lessened our activity, and I sometimes wondered whither all that inexhaustible energy felt on the mountains had departed; for we had done nothing in the morning to fatigue us, and yet we experienced a decided disinclination to exertion.

Down the middle of every street in Aosta there is a conduit of clear water, but the milky hue indicates its glacier origin. In this conduit we saw tubs and wine-casks standing, with the water running through to purify them. Occasionally, where the stream is

wide, a plank is placed across to form a kind of bridge, and save one from taking the good jump which would otherwise be necessary. Aosta is very well supplied with shops, and De la Pierre, who arrived in the course of the afternoon, employed himself busily in buying bread, wine, groceries, poulets, fish, fruit, and other requisites for our journey. He was determined that whatever might be the other deficiencies to be experienced at Cogne, there should be no lack of an abundant commissariat. He also called on the Abbé Cavagnet, who is a professor in the College at Aosta, and a native of Cogne. The Abbé, on being informed of our intended journey, expressed the kindest interest in it, and announced his intention of paying us a visit, in order that he might render us any service in his power. Accordingly in the evening he called upon us at the hotel. He is an amiable, intelligent-looking man, and we had a most agreeable conversation with him on a variety of topics of the most miscellaneous character. He told us that crétinism was decidedly on the decrease, though its mysterious cause is still imperfectly understood. It is not entirely to be referred to the dirty habits of the lower population, though that may aggravate predisposing causes. On the contrary, crétinism will sometimes make its appearance among persons in the upper ranks of life, and the Abbé informed us that he was acquainted with a lady and gentleman in the valley, who lived with all the

comforts and cleanliness of modern civilisation, but had been visited with the misfortune of having one child a decided crétin, though none of the others showed any trace of the disease. Another circumstance which is frequently spoken of as the cause of crétinism is the stagnation of the air; but I was assured by several persons who reside in the Val d'Aosta, and my own experience confirms it, that there is a perpetual breeze blowing through the valley. The Abbé informed us that Dr. Argentier, who is the medical officer at Cogne appointed by the Government, was a friend of his, and he promised us a letter of introduction to him. The Abbé had not long left us before a carriage drove up to the hotel with a party of English ladies and gentlemen; we found that some of them were old friends of ours, who were going to cross the Great St. Bernard on the next morning. They had been following our track along the valley of Aosta, and it was a subject of mutual congratulation that we were able to meet, though only for one evening, to exchange warm greetings and words of kindness, and to listen to each other's adventures. We also met at Aosta two English ladies, already past the noon of life, who were travelling alone, and had made the circuit of Mont Blanc from Chamounix to Courmayeur, accompanied only by an excellent Oberland guide, who had taken the greatest care of them in their adventurous expedition. They were not persons whom one would have supposed to have possessed the courage

necessary for the risks and hardships of an Alpine tour, but the love of beautiful scenery had impelled them to undertake it, and their enthusiasm seemed only heightened by the difficulties they had encountered.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM AOSTA TO COGNE.

Departure from Aosta — A dusty road — Remains of ancient glacial action — The Château of Aimaville — Iron-mines of Cogne — Almond-trees — The Valley of Cogne — Roman aqueduct — Scanty population of the valley — The Curé of Vielle — Improvident miners — An inscribed rock — Dr. Grappin — View of the Pic de Grivola — The Bouquetin — A royal hunting-ground — The village of Cogne and its dirty inn — De la Pierre's greatness under difficulties — Fumigation — Weather-omens.

Sept. 16.—This was a beautiful day, but one in which the sun again made his power felt. We had scarcely finished breakfast before the Abbé Cavagnet called, bringing with him the promised letter of introduction to Dr. Auguste Argentier, of Cogne. We found on the table of the *salle-à-manger*, among other books, a little brochure written by the Doctor, called 'Guide Pratique aux Bains de Pré St. Didier en Val d'Aoste;' and certainly if anything were wanting, in addition to the exceeding beauty of St. Didier, to induce invalids to pay a visit there, it would be amply supplied by this nicely-written pamphlet.

Upon the scientific and medicinal portions of the work I am unable to give any opinion; but from the well-known talent of the writer I cannot doubt the correct-

ness of his conclusions. His description of the broad rich valley of Aosta is so beautiful and true that it deserves quotation :—

"La nature est belle, le ciel pur, le soleil chaud, l'air doux et tempéré ; de toute part la végétation montre sa force. On est frappé du haut degré de culture auquel on est arrivé. Ce sont des champs où le maïs croît et prospère à faire envie aux plus grasses campagnes du Piémont, des arbres fruitiers de toutes sortes, des prés émaillés de fleurs où l'on récolte à plaine faux de gras pâturages. A droite, une colline où les vignes s'étendent, admirablement cultivées, à perte de vue, et du milieu de ces vignes aux longs murs, aux nombreux piliers blancs alignés, des maisons de campagne ressortant proprettes et élégantes. A gauche, des prés, des champs, des forêts, des châlets, puis le front blanc et austère du Nomenon ;* puis la Côte de Gargantua, aride, s'avançant comme un rideau, au milieu de la campagne, pour dérober une partie de l'horizon aux habitans de Gressan. Gressan vit naître S. Anselme (1033), qui mourut archevêque de Cantorbéry en 1109."

De la Pierre occupied a long time in packing his purchases on the mule, and it was not until 10 A.M. that we started. As I mounted little "Nina" in the court-yard, our friends who had arrived last night gathered in a group in the gallery, to wish us a pleasant and successful expedition. The almost unexplored country we were about to visit had excited their enthusiasm, and they seemed half disposed to join our party, and perhaps might have done so, had not another engagement prevented them ; but they were little aware of the discomforts, and something worse, to which they

* In the commune of Vieges are the châlets of Nomenon, which have sometimes given the name of Pic de Nomenon to the Grivola.

would have been exposed. In consequence of our starting at so late an hour, we found the dusty high road intolerably hot, and the sun positively scorched us. We trudged along the left bank of the Doire in a determined spirit of endurance for an hour and a half, until we came opposite the Château of Aimaville, placed upon a picturesque knoll on the other side of the river. We were heartily glad when De la Pierre told us that we were here to leave the high road and cross the Doire to the valley opposite, which was that of Cogne. The path from the high road to the bridge proceeds immediately under an immense mound of stones and earth, as precipitous as a wall, which goes on increasing in height until it reaches the river, where it forms a lofty cliff, several hundred feet high. It had evidently once stretched across the valley, but the Doire has cut through it and swept away all except the cliff, which now towers above its left bank. My companions indulged in an animated discussion as to its origin, and came to the conclusion that it was not an alluvial deposit, but the remnant of an ancient moraine; and this conclusion appears confirmed by the opinion of M. Carrel, who states that the Valley of Aosta was at a remote epoch filled by a glacier of the height of about 2430 feet (750 mètres) above the level of the Doire.*

Little "Nina" and the mule seemed equally glad with ourselves to leave the dusty road, and when we crossed

* 'Les Alpes Pennines,' &c., par C. Carrel, Aoste, 1835.

the bridge we found ourselves at once in the midst of beautiful green meadows and under the refreshing shade of trees. One of our party picked up a head of Indian corn which had been dropped on the road, and this was now given to "Nina," as an encouragement before her ascent of the valley. It was amusing to observe how skilfully she turned it over and over in her mouth till she had taken off every grain of corn, and she then tossed down the stalk with evident regret that there was nothing more on it to her taste. As we approached the Château of Aimaville, its architecture did not improve by a nearer inspection. There are four round towers, the intervening spaces between which are filled up by bare faces of masonry pierced for windows. The general effect is positively ugly. We found an excellent mule path, which led into the valley of Cogne, and proceeded along its whole length. Indeed one of the most surprising circumstances connected with this little-frequented valley is the goodness of the road. This is owing to the fact that near the village of Cogne are iron mines which contain some of the richest ore in the world, and the road was formed for the purpose of conveying the produce to Aosta; but although these mines are still unexhausted, and the ore as rich as ever, the great forests round Cogne, which formerly supplied charcoal for smelting the iron, have become so much exhausted that the mines can no longer be worked at a profit, and the workings have

been abandoned. We found by the road side a large heap of the iron-stone, and we were all astonished at its metallic richness and weight. A lump of it when taken in the hand felt like a mass of cast iron. As we ascended from the right bank of the Doire, we passed through several small and pretty villages, surrounded by green enamelled meadows and embosomed in fruit trees. In winding up the path which leads to the entrance of the Cogne Valley, we passed under a little avenue of almond trees, and for the first time I saw that fruit growing on the tree. De la Pierre said that the almonds were not nice to eat, and were principally used for making oil. Vines were also trellised over the path, and the chestnut and walnut trees spread themselves aloft with their usual luxuriance.

A steep ascent brought us at last into the deep and wild ravine which leads to Cogne, and at the bottom of this a foaming torrent rushes with prodigious violence until it reaches the Doire. Our path proceeded along the right bank of this torrent, at an immense height above it, and as we peeped over the shelving well-wooded precipice and caught glimpses of the stream beneath, we were reminded of the celebrated pass of Killiecrankie in Scotland. Its historical associations are even more remarkable than those which belong to the spot that witnessed the death of Dundee; for at the bottom of this ravine, at a place called the Pont d'Ael, there is a Roman aqueduct, with numerous arches,

which dates its origin as far back as the time of Augustus. It crosses the river by a single arch, which is still used as a bridge by persons who, on descending the valley, wish to proceed to Villeneuve. This relic of the ancient conquerors of the world was, however, at so great a depth below the road, that we did not venture to lose time by descending to examine it. As we looked down into the chasm, we saw a number of Alpine swifts, which are much larger than any seen in England; they were darting about with wonderful rapidity, but notwithstanding their size they looked, in the abyss below, as tiny as flies. Above our heads rose lofty precipitous rocks, towering into the deep blue sky. The whole scene was one of extraordinary wildness and beauty, and as we proceeded farther on our way, we caught sight of a little white church, perched most picturesquely on an eminence in the middle of the valley, where it forms a conspicuous object from a considerable distance.

At 2 P.M. we reached Vielle, where there are a few poor looking houses; one of them, however, has a spacious and high roofed shed attached, and there entertainment of a very humble kind may be found for man and horse. Thither De là Pierre conducted us that we might rest and lunch. We should have much preferred to have selected, for such a purpose, some nice, fragrant, sheltered spot in the valley, but it was necessary that "Nina" and the mule should be fed, and the

dusty earthern floor of this place, because it was roofed over, was the most suitable for them. The good woman of the house did all she could to make us comfortable. We sat on a bench on the landing of her door steps, and had a clean cloth spread on the stone wall which served for a table. We preferred this to sitting in the close little room of the cottage, where De la Pierre was busying himself with his culinary arrangements. An ample supply of meat, fowls, and fruit, taken from our own stores, was soon placed before us. To these were added some excellent bread and butter, and very good red *vin ordinaire*, provided by the hostess, whose intelligent, good-natured face and bright eyes quite reconciled us to the roughness of the accommodation. The pony and mule were tied up close by, and ate their provender with appetites which exceeded even our own.

One of the most striking things connected with the Valley of Cogne is the scantiness of the population. It looks like a place that has fallen into reduced circumstances, and so indeed it has, since its mines ceased to be worked. Visitors are great rarities there, and everyone in this solitary district seems eager to enjoy the opportunity of a gossip with a new comer. I observed, as we entered Vielle, that the curé of the place had caught sight of us, and when we left it to proceed on our journey up the valley, we found him on the look out. He was evidently pleased to have a little society and chat during his afternoon's walk, and he turned out

to be a curious and eccentric character, who amused us very much by his peculiar manner and conversation. On first coming up with him, I was a little in advance of my party, and was collecting some pretty specimens of ferns, one or two varieties of the adiantum, and these afforded the first topic of conversation. He told me they were used medicinally, especially for fomentations, by the people of the neighbourhood. He was full of dry humour, and wanted very much to know what had really brought us to such a place as the valley of Cogne. When I talked a little sentimentally about the beauty of the scenery, he listened with a smile of incredulity, and at the end of every sentence that excited either approbation or surprise, he uttered, in the funniest manner possible, the exclamation "Bah!" I could scarcely preserve my gravity, and felt quite relieved when my companions came up. He asked them, in their turn, what had induced them to come there, and when they began to expatiate on the mountains, and talked of ascending the Grivola, they elicited a whole volley of "Bahs!" At last the curé, who was evidently dissatisfied with our explanations, looked down with a most inquisitive glance at Mr. L—'s geological hammer, which he carried in his hand, and a suspicion appeared to cross the worthy man's mind that we were under the influence of some ulterior purposes connected with mining speculations which we were unwilling to disclose. The valley is full of the richest minerals, and

possesses not only unexhausted mines of iron-ore, but also, I believe, gold and silver. The bent of the people's thoughts there is always towards mining. The curé told us that mining affairs were then at a low ebb, on account of the improvidence of the miners, who had felled whole forests without planting a single young tree to supply their place. Hence Silvenoire, through which we had just passed, which derived its name from the black forest that once darkened the sides of the mountains, is now bare of wood. The curé was not, I fancy, born in the valley, and he expressed some surprise that even the natives could feel affection for such a dreary place, where life became a trial from its extreme dullness, and he quoted, as his explanation of the fact, a sentence from St. Pierre, which, as well as I can recollect, was to the following effect:—"Plus un pays est *disgracié* par la nature, plus les hommes lui sont attachés." The word "disgracié," which he pronounced with much emphasis, sounded very strange to our ears, and indicated very plainly what the curé thought on the subject of wild and savage scenery.

We came to a spot in the valley where, upon the smooth face of a crag overhanging the road, we found a variety of inscriptions carved in the live rock. They were mostly quotations from Latin and French authors, and were all written in a philosophical, moralising strain, such as might have been adopted by Jaques in the forest of Arden. We inquired who could have used the rocks

for the purpose of enlightening, on such topics, the uncultivated natives of the valley; and we learned that the inscriptions had been engraved under the directions of the late Dr. Grappin, formerly medical officer of the commune, who was quite a character in his way, and acquired a great reputation for benevolence and eccentricity. He lived to a good old age at Cogne, did many works of kindness and charity, and accumulated a small fortune. It is to his public spirit and zeal that the construction of the admirable mule-road along the valley is to be mainly attributed. Unfortunately, however, for ourselves and other visitors to Cogne, Dr. Grappin, who was the most influential man there for about thirty years, did nothing to introduce habits of cleanliness among the population; and he suffered his own personal appearance to become so untidy and neglected that he set a very bad example to persons in an inferior position to himself, who were naturally disposed to admire and imitate him. Alas! if cleanliness is next to godliness, the inhabitants of Cogne must be a long way from the hope of heaven!

Our new acquaintance the curé walked with us until we came in sight of Crétaz, the village immediately before Cogne. As he bade us adieu, we asked him whether he thought we should have a fine day to-morrow for the Grivola. The question of course produced another "Bah!" The curé prognosticated bad weather, because, on his walk through the valley that

morning, he had heard the eagles scream, which he said was a sign of rain.

Before we reached Cogne we had, though only for a few minutes, a fine view of the Pic de Grivola, the form of which is most peculiar. A rough perpendicular precipice of dark rock tapers up into the sky, and forms one side of a nearly triangular peak, the other two sides, which are more sloping, being clothed with a smooth mantle of snow. We halted to gaze on this, the loftiest eminence of the Graian Alps; and our stay would have been longer had we supposed for a moment that this would have been our only view of the remarkable summit which we had come so far to see. It is not visible from the Valley of Cogne except at this particular spot; for the lofty mountains on the left bank of the stream shut it out from sight. The Cogne range of mountains has now become the favourite hunting-ground of the King of Sardinia, and the grandest quarry there for the sportsman is the rare and beautiful ibex or bouquetin, now nearly extinct in most other parts of the Alps. All persons are strictly prohibited from killing this animal, but such a law is easier made than enforced. The King has recently purchased from the commune of Cogne the exclusive right of shooting in the district; and a few miles before arriving at the village we observed a written notice by which the "chasse" above that point is prohibited. It is very unusual to see a notice-board of that kind in Piedmont, and we were

reminded of the jealous warnings to trespassers so extensively met with in our own country.

Until Cogne is reached, the valley continues very thinly populated; and its bare rocks on either side, diversified at frequent intervals by enormous masses that have been hurled from above by avalanches and torrents, impress the mind with a feeling of the presence of complete desolation. This is increased by one's occasionally coming upon the ruins of buildings formerly used for mining purposes, but now abandoned. When we were approaching Cogne, De la Pierre hurried on before, that he might make a few preparations for our reception, and deliver our letter of introduction to Dr. Argentier. We followed at our leisure, and reached the village at about 6 P.M.

The village of Cogne is a collection of wretched buildings, most charmingly situated in a broad expanse of verdant meadows, in the midst of an amphitheatre of lofty mountains. On the right hand, towards the south-west, lies Valnobe, where, at a great height above Cogne, is seen the termination of an enormous, finely-coloured glacier, which proceeds from the Cogne range. The Grivola lies concealed, and is at a considerable distance to the west of Cogne. No one in the valley who was not aware of the fact would suspect that so lofty a peak was in his immediate vicinity. We entered the village, and wended our way through the principal street or lane, looking about us and ex-

pecting (but in vain) to see something of De la Pierre; we found ourselves at last in front of a dingy looking building with an open space before it, and here the pony and mule were standing tied up. We concluded that this must be the inn, although there was no sign-board suspended, nor any other indication of what it was. We were confirmed in our impression by observing a slab of stone let into the wall, with a pompous inscription on it, announcing that some of the princes of the House of Savoy had in a certain year taken up their quarters there, on the occasion of a visit paid by them to the iron-mines of Cogne. The inscription would be much more to the purpose if the princes had come *twice*, for such an improbability would indeed have been worth recording, and ought to be recorded of any one, should it ever occur. As we stood before the inn, we could hear the voice of De la Pierre inside, haranguing the people at a great rate. This, as we afterwards learned, was to induce them to put the place a little to rights before we entered it. De la Pierre had told me, in one of our chats on the road, that whenever a party of English arrives at his hotel the first thing he always does is to run and open the windows, but that when the party is of Piedmontese, he runs with equal celerity to close them; thus adapting himself to what he knows to be the prevailing tastes of his visitors. We had reason to be grateful to him, that on the present occasion he had put his favourite rule

into practice, and had unfastened every casement and allowed the fresh sweet air to enter the dirty squalid rooms we were destined to occupy. He had also caused water to be plentifully sprinkled on the floors, and then as much dirt to be swept off as could be accomplished in the short time allowed him. He assured us afterwards that had he not done so, it would have been impossible for us to have remained in the house at all. Many are the hardships of travelling, but none is so difficult to be endured with patience as want of cleanliness, and one loathes the unscrubbed, dirt-begrimed floors so often met with in Italian inns.

When we made our arrival known, De la Pierre bustled out to receive us, followed by the landlord. We entered the inn, proceeding first through a dungeon-like hole, used apparently for stowing away wood, and then ascending a dark staircase which conducted us to a long, dim, dirty passage, with the kitchen and *salle-à-manger* on one side, and three or four uninviting, indeed filthy-looking, bedrooms on the other. Our spirits immediately became depressed, but those of De la Pierre seemed to rise with the greatness of the emergency. Figaro himself could not have been more active or indefatigable than De la Pierre now proved in the arduous position in which he was placed. He was by turns cook, upper-chambermaid, and waiter, besides acting as chief guide and looking after the pony and mule; and he proved himself to be truly great under the pressure of

the difficulties that beset him. He had already hunted out Dr. Argentier, who occupies a suite of rooms in the many-storied house or tower which adjoins the inn. This was formerly part of the now dismantled château of the Seigneurs of Cogne. The kind young doctor readily placed his bachelor quarters at the service of our friend Mr. L—, whilst we took up our abode in the largest bedroom of the inn, which had the advantage of two small windows. By keeping these windows and the door wide open, we contrived to ventilate the room until we retired to bed; but then there was no help for it! we could only shut them, and go to sleep with a dogged resolution to forget the existence of our miseries and to conquer all sense of smell. I have heard it related that an enterprising member of the Alpine Club, who once found himself in a similar difficulty, had recourse to the homely expedient of taking two tallow candles to his room, and letting one burn until the wick assumed the appearance called a "Sweet William;" then, having first lighted the other, he blew it out, and used its smoke as a pastile. When the smoke of the extinguished candle became exhausted the other was ready to be blown out in its turn, and the process was repeated. Thus the ingenious traveller effected a complete system of fumigation, and though the odour could not have been very nice, it prevented his suffering from others of a still more objectionable nature.

There was a small balcony at the end of the passage

adjoining our bedroom, and as this was in the open air, we made it when we first arrived our place of refuge until Dr. Argentier came and warned us that the air was becoming too cold, and that it would be dangerous to remain in the balcony any longer. We excited a good deal of attention whilst sitting there. Many in the village who had no particular occupation came out to take a look at the strangers, and a band of little children were so much amused with the unaccustomed sight, that they established themselves opposite "en permanence." We then went to the *salle-à-manger*, which was a few degrees better than the sleeping apartments, because it had nothing in it that could be disagreeable, its only furniture being two deal tables and a few benches; the floor also had just been swept under De la Pierre's superintendence. Here, in order to do honour to their distinguished visitors, the people of the inn contrived to muster from the bedrooms four wooden chairs, which had to be carried backwards and forwards as required for use. In about an hour after our arrival, De la Pierre placed before us an excellent dinner, which did him great credit as our "chef de cuisine," and this was followed by a cup of delicious coffee. Dr. Argentier took tea with us, and promised to join in our excursion on the morrow up the Grivola, and we rejoiced in the prospect of having so agreeable a companion. We made arrangements for starting early in the morning, and

were full of hopes that by a successful ascent we should be recompensed for all our discomforts, and be able, amidst the magnificent scenes of nature, to forget the wretchedness and dirt of Cogne. No one, however, appeared to hold out to us much prospect of a fine day. De la Pierre, with a melancholy air, said he considered that the peculiar way in which the kitchen fire crackled and smoked when he was cooking, indicated rain, and he seemed to have as much confidence in this unpropitious omen as the curé had in the screaming of the eagles.

CHAPTER XVII.

EXPEDITION TO THE GRIVOLA.

De la Pierre's arrangements for the occasion — The Royal Chasseurs — The order of ascent — A poacher on royal preserves — The bouquetin — Pedestrianism in full activity — An obstacle to further advance — An Alpine tonic — Story of a guide and the rum-bottle — A royal huntsman — The ascent to the Pic — A rain-storm and hospitable sheltering-place — A parting civility to La Grivola — A scamper down the mountain — Dr. Argentier — The rustic population of Cogne — Our party divided — The return to Aosta — Return to Châtillon — Exploit of the Curé of Cogne — The Becca de Nona.

Sept. 17.—We were up this morning at 5; the sky was cloudy, but there were occasional glimpses of sunshine before we started on our expedition to the Grivola. This was not till 7.30 A.M.; for a long interval was occupied as usual by De la Pierre's arrangements. Besides the preparation of our breakfasts and his own, the pony and mule had to be fed, and afterwards saddled and bridled, and a good store of provisions, with our cloaks, had to be carefully packed on the mule's back. We should certainly have preferred a more propitious-looking day, but the inn was so uncomfortable that it was impossible to wait there until better weather came, and as there seemed a reasonable chance that the afternoon might be fine, and that the clouds which hung about

the mountain-tops would disperse, we determined to take our chance and proceed. There ought to have been a superb view of Mont Blanc from the open space before the inn, but nothing of the kind was visible while we were at Cogne.

Two of the Royal Chasseurs, who have the care of the King's hunting-grounds at Cogne, were waiting at the inn to know if we required their services. They were short, sturdy, and most respectable looking men, between 30 and 40 years of age, and dressed in a kind of uniform; each wore a dark blue costume of thick materials, with a leathern belt round the waist, in which were stuck a hatchet for lopping wood, a "couteau de chasse," and other implements; and on his low-crowned, broad-brimmed hat might be read in letters of gold, "Chasseur du Roi." During our breakfast we heard De la Pierre engaged in a most energetic discussion with them, as to which was the best route for ascending the Grivola. He had on his excursion with Mr. and Mrs. King, about three years previously, been led into considerable difficulties by the recklessness of the chamois-hunter Glarey, who then acted as guide, and he seemed now to have a theory of his own, which was not quite acceded to by the Chasseurs, who of course insisted upon their superior knowledge, and were not disposed to yield to De la Pierre. The latter finally had the good sense to give way; for it was absurd to have a controversy on such a subject with men who, from the nature

of their avocations, knew every inch of the ground. They turned out to be quite right; and when we had arrived at a considerable height, De la Pierre pointed out to us the much steeper and more difficult route by which Mr. and Mrs. King had ascended under the guidance of Glarey. De la Pierre, who made all the arrangements for us, and was not disposed to let our money be wasted, had only engaged one of the Chasseurs, though all they demanded for their services was the modest sum of 3 francs each! The Chasseur selected by De la Pierre was by no means the more intelligent looking of the two, and when we came out of the inn, the other was standing by with rather a disappointed air; but he brightened up when we told him that we should be glad if he also would accompany us.

On leaving the inn we proceeded a short distance down the valley, following the course of the stream as far as the bridge; but instead of crossing we turned to the left along a footpath which soon led us to the bottom of a dry ravine, fringed on each side with hanging woods. We went about three parts up this ravine, and then turned off to the right by a well-defined footpath, which we followed all the rest of the way. The ascent was frequently very rapid, and the narrow path was sometimes on the very edge of the precipice; but instead of encountering the formidable difficulties we had anticipated, we found them really less than those which had

to be surmounted in riding up the Col d'Ollen from Alagna. We proceeded at first in single file. The senior chasseur, whose services we had specially retained, led the way; then I followed on "Nina;" next came Mr. L—, Dr. Argentier, and H—; while De la Pierre and the second chasseur, with the mule, brought up the rear. We formed a very picturesque-looking party as we went up the mountain "on our winding way." We came, after a short time, to a group of châlets where some men were haymaking, and a few words of greeting passed between them and the Doctor, who told them where we were going, and that they must have a dish of cream ready for us when we came back. They seemed to gaze in a kind of bewilderment as to what we could be about. It became much steeper after leaving these châlets, and the only other person I saw in the course of our journey was a man who was coming down the path to the châlets we had just quitted. When he heard where we were going to, he seemed quite in consternation at the idea of my venturing upon such an undertaking, and cried out to me, "Ah! Madame, vous serez perdue." But although I saw no one else, our quick-sighted chasseurs descried at a distance a figure which they immediately recognised as that of a well-known poacher. A stern and gloomy expression settled on the countenances of the two chasseurs as they debated together in mysterious whispers and muttered angry words between their teeth. I could not catch sight of

the person who so seriously disturbed their equanimity. Fortunately he had no gun with him, or I think the chasseurs would have gone off in full chase, and left us to shift for ourselves.

Notwithstanding the prohibition against killing the bouquetin, the passion for the chace is so strong that no vigilance can effectually prevent its being followed, even on the King's own hunting-ground. The lofty precipices on our right hand are the favourite haunts of this rare and interesting animal; and we peered about anxiously during the day in the hopes of seeing one, but were not so fortunate. It is a peculiarity of the bouquetin that it requires to be approached from above; and those in pursuit of them are accustomed to bivouac during the night on lofty summits, and then to come down upon them at daybreak at their favourite feeding-grounds, some of which were pointed out to us.

We did not long preserve the order of march in which we started; for glimpses of sunshine were becoming less frequent, the clouds appeared rather to increase than diminish, and our eagerness to arrive at the summit before bad weather should set in, impelled us onwards at such a rate that my companions speedily outstripped the senior chasseur, Mr. L— taking as usual the lead. The chasseur, who I have no doubt could have walked the whole day at his own pace without fatigue, exhibited manifest symptoms of distress: his face was flushed with exertion, and the perspiration trickled down his forehead

in large drops. He made tremendous efforts to keep in front, but found it impossible. Dr. Argentier was highly amused, and explained to the chasseur that the English gentlemen were members of the "Société des Alpes," and that this was the pace at which they were accustomed to walk. I looked behind occasionally to see how De la Pierre was getting on; for he is no longer young, and the excellent dinners which his skilful functionary "Cuoco" provides every day at the Pension de la Pierre have a little interfered with the slimness of his figure and the activity of his limbs. The poor man was gasping from shortness of breath, and earnestly complaining to the second chasseur of the severity of the pace, which, despite his great personal strength, was more than he could manage. At last he could bear it no longer, and springing on the baggage-mule, sat there in the most picturesque position, with his feet hanging before the panniers. Mr. L— was at last induced to go a little slower, and we then went steadily upwards, with the senior chasseur once more in front and De la Pierre on foot.

Our farther progress was now impeded by a most serious obstacle. Just at a point where our road lay along a shelving slope, with a precipice below, and was so narrow that it would have been almost impracticable for a horse or mule to have turned round, a newly-felled fir-tree had fallen right across the path, so as completely to block it up. A council of war was held as to what should

be done; some thought that "Nina" and the mule could be made to step over the tree, but the projecting branches rendered this impossible. The order was therefore given that the obstacle must be removed. The chasseurs instantly drew forth their hatchets, and began vigorously to cut off the branches of the prostrate tree. I was quite astonished at the brittleness of the wood, for the largest branch required only half a dozen hearty chops round it, and then, after a few good tugs, it snapped in twain like a carrot. While this operation was going on I remained sitting on "Nina," which stood in the quietest way possible on the path, watching the proceedings; but as the trunk of the tree had to be rolled over when the branches were sufficiently lopped away, and this, if occurring suddenly, might frighten the animal, it was thought prudent that I should dismount, which I did with some difficulty on account of the confined space. "Nina" was then left to herself, and I climbed a few feet up the slope, which was so steep that I could scarcely manage to stand there. Little "Nina," however, stood firmly at her post, and never started or swerved even when the huge trunk, dismantled of its principal branches, was at last rolled off the path to the inclined plane below, with all its smaller boughs waving about in the air in violently-agitated motion. The pony and the mule were then able to pass on safely; and as the ascent had now become more than usually difficult, I followed on foot for a short

distance until the path improved. Dr. Argentier, who is an accomplished botanist, is in the habit of collecting a great many of the plants which he uses medicinally for his patients, and he gathered many interesting specimens as we went along. As he never loses the opportunity of a joke, he dug up the knotty, uninviting-looking root of a gentian, and after paring it with his knife, cut it into thin slices, which he presented for our taste and approval, declaring that the root was an excellent tonic. Its intense bitter produced of course a wry face; and the worthy chasseurs, who were quite alive to the joke, and found it not above the level of their understandings, were convulsed with laughter when they witnessed the expected result.

At about 10.30 A.M. we reached some unoccupied châlets on the shoulder of the mountain, where, on De la Pierre's former visit with Mr. and Mrs. King, he had hidden his bottle of Turin "rhum" before ascending to the higher regions. The guide Glarey, on that occasion, contrived, before the day was over, to give his party the slip, and to arrive first at the place where the rum had been stowed away; and as he managed to empty it all but a glass or two before the others returned, they found him in an almost helpless state of intoxication. This incident appears to have produced a profound impression at Cogne, where anecdotes are few and much cherished. The story was repeated to us over and over again, and we were taken

to see the exact place where it occurred. Each traveller who ascends the Grivola must expect to have this, which is the standing joke of the place, related to him by everybody who wishes to be facetious, and must moreover join in the laugh which always accompanies its relation. Glarey is the brother of the curé of Cogne, and on making inquiries as to what had become of the scapegrace, we were told that when the King purchased of the commune the exclusive right of sporting there, Glarey, who is a notable mountaineer, was appointed one of his chasseurs, but his reckless, careless conduct soon got him into disgrace, and he was dismissed. He had quitted Cogne when we were there. His brother the curé is also renowned as a mountaineer, and is said to have a few other of the family qualities, but we had not the opportunity of making his acquaintance. The King of Sardinia is a great hunter of the chamois and bouquetin. We asked where he lodged when he came to Cogne, and were told that he never ventures into any of the wretched habitations there, but pitches his tents on the mountain-side, where at night he wraps himself round in his large cloak and sleeps on the bare earth. When I expressed some wonder at the hardships he must undergo, I was informed that his case was not, in all respects, one requiring commiseration; for he was always attended by a suite of cooks and a grand "batterie de cuisine," and lived right royally during his hunting campaign.

We stayed for about a quarter of an hour at the châlets to rest, and took some slight refreshment before commencing the more arduous ascent which was to lead us to the Grivola. Not a glimpse of the Pic is to be obtained there, nor can it be seen at all until the Col is reached. The scene around us was one of singular wildness; on looking back we beheld the valley of Cogne at an immense depth below, but mists were driving rapidly through it, and curling up the sides of the mountains. Above us, on the right hand, towered an enormous buttress of rock, whose precipitous flanks appeared inaccessible, and which cut off from us all view of the Pic de Grivola, although we were in its immediate vicinity. Exactly in front of us, and below this rocky buttress, was a steep incline up which it was possible to go, but which was strewed over with masses of rock and débris that had fallen from the mountain above and formed that mixture of loose material which is so peculiarly undesirable for pedestrians.

On recommencing our journey I expressed my readiness to walk the rest of the way, but De la Pierre would not hear of it, and insisted that I could still ride "Nina" for half an hour longer. I accordingly remounted, and rode forwards. We then came to a large rock, which projects from the mountain and forms a small cave under it. Here I alighted, for the way up was getting too steep to allow me to ride farther with safety. The clouds, instead of dispersing,

were becoming more dense, and our view was limited to occasional glimpses of the valley. We went a little farther, but a shower of rain-drops brought us to a sudden halt. De la Pierre and the chasseurs now assured us that we were only three quarters of an hour below the Col ascended by Mr. and Mrs. King, and from which they had enjoyed the magnificent view so eloquently described in 'The Italian Valleys of the Pennine Alps.' * Under such circumstances we thought it was better to pause a little; for we had abundance of time before us, if the weather would only clear up. We therefore retreated to the huge rock I have just mentioned, and took shelter under it from the rain, which now began to assume a more decided character. Here we waited for more than two hours, amusing ourselves as well as we could. Dr. Argentier insisted that "Madame" must be provided with a suitable couch, and the chasseurs set to work, under his directions, to construct one. After much tugging and straining they succeeded in lifting into position a large flat slab of stone to form the seat; another slab was placed for the back, and a third, rather higher than the rest, for a pillow. The stony couch was then pronounced perfect, and "Madame" was requested to inaugurate it. I did so, and found it made a very comfortable seat—so comfortable indeed, that when I had been left quiet for a few minutes, I caught myself indulging in a slight nap

* Page 331.

after the fatigue of climbing. It was not possible, however, to enjoy much repose in the midst of such a merry band of companions; as the weather became worse, the jokes at our misfortune became more frequent, and we all tried to laugh away our disappointment with the best grace we could. Finding it utterly impossible to proceed farther on account of the rain, we determined to content ourselves with performing the civility of leaving our cards on La Grivola, as she was not visible to-day; accordingly slips of paper with our names written on them were deposited with great gravity in a broken bottle, and stowed away under the hospitable rock which had sheltered us.

All chance of the view was at last pronounced hopeless; the macintoshes were sent for, and thoroughly disheartened, we began our descent at 2.15 P.M. We went along at first slowly and reluctantly, with frequent backward glances in the direction we had wished to go, but had not proceeded far before the weather became worse, and it began to rain in torrents. There was then a regular scamper down the mountain, every one trying to run as fast as possible. The young Doctor, who had no macintosh, and despised an umbrella, started away at full gallop, outstripped everybody, and was soon at Cogne. Mr. L— and H— accommodated themselves to my pace, but we went so fast that we left De la Pierre with "Nina" and the mule far behind us, and we got back to the inn at 4.10 P.M. We were sorely disappointed

at our "coup manqué," but not much wetted with the rain. Dr. Argentier came out to greet us, and invited us to spend the interval before dinner in his apartments. So after putting on some dry things and ordering dinner at seven o'clock, we proceeded to the bachelor's quarters. The Doctor received us very kindly, gave us a refreshing cup of tea, and we had a most interesting discussion, principally on botanical subjects. What greatly astonished us in this secluded spot, was to find an admirable library in the Doctor's lodgings, carefully selected from authors of all nations. But the Doctor himself was as remarkable as his books, and one could not but feel surprise at finding so much enlightenment in a district where it can be so little appreciated. In the rural districts of England the clergyman is generally the focus of civilization, but in the southern Alps the doctor often supplies his place, and the "curé" is frequently but one degree above a peasant. Dr. Argentier is only about twenty-five years old, and has received a superior education at Turin and Paris; he holds his appointment as medical officer for six years, and is paid by the commune a salary of only 4000 francs a year. He looks upon his term of employment at Cogne as a kind of banishment, and complains despondingly that there is not a single person at any place nearer than Aosta with sufficient intellectual culture to be his companion or sympathise in his pursuits. Why so able a man should

be suffered to remain buried at Cogne, it is difficult to say. In one respect, indeed, his presence there might prove useful, for should any accident happen to the King while engaged in hunting, his Majesty would have on the spot one highly competent to give him medical assistance; the Doctor's friends, nevertheless, must wish him rapid promotion elsewhere.

At seven o'clock we all adjourned to the *salle-à-manger* of the inn, where De la Pierre endeavoured to retrieve the fortunes of the day by providing us with a capital dinner. His *chef d'œuvre* was a tureen of "Zuppa Scozzese," made, as he assured us, according to Mrs. King's own recipe, and we all pronounced it excellent. It seems likely to become very popular in Piedmont; and a grateful recollection will ever be retained of our countrywoman who introduced it there. While we were at dinner three rustics, who were afterwards joined by a woman, came into the *salle-à-manger*, for the ostensible purpose of enjoying a glass of wine, and took their seat at the other table; but as their eyes were generally fixed in our direction, we strongly suspected that they merely came to have a stare at the English travellers who had been trying to ascend the Grivola. However, they sat very quietly, and gave us no annoyance. We were told that many of these people who look, and in fact are, no better than common peasants, possess a good deal of money, sometimes as much as 5000*l*. One can easily understand that per-

sons who amass money here, have not many temptations to induce them to spend it, and thus it goes on accumulating. The same thing is sometimes to be found among the small farmers who live in the secluded districts of Scotland. Cogne is but a humble village, and has been in a depressed state since the mines were abandoned; the inhabitants, nevertheless, appear to be in comfortable circumstances; and all whom I saw, both old and young, were dressed in clothes of strong and durable materials.

Sept. 18.—The clouds this morning still hung in dense masses over the mountains, and no summit was visible, but the valley of Cogne was clear. Although the rain had ceased, the weather gave us no encouragement to attempt another ascent of the Grivola, and the idea of enduring the discomforts of a further stay in the inn at Cogne, in the hope of fine weather, was insupportable. We therefore determined to quit the place that day. Our friend Mr. L— was eager to return to England, for his leave of absence had expired, and visions of happy faces waiting to welcome him under the magnificent cedars which surround his home rendered him impatient of further delay. He had determined when descending the valley of Cogne to cross the Pont d'Ael and thus reach Villeneuve, where a carriage was to meet and take him on to Courmayeur. Thence he intended to cross the Col de Ferret to Martigny, and so return to England. H— and I were going to Turin on our way

to Central Italy, and our nearest route would have been to have gone from Cogne by the Val Champorcher to the Pont St. Martin, at the farther end of the Val d'Aosta. De la Pierre was most anxious to conduct us by this route, but the distance was too great to be accomplished in one day, and we could get no satisfactory account as to where we should sleep on the road. Our experience at Cogne had made us indisposed "to fly to evils that we knew not of;" and although, if the weather had been fine, we might have ventured to risk the perils which attend night-quarters in unfrequented villages, the heavy threatening clouds gave so little hope of our being able to see anything but the bottom of the valley, that we reluctantly determined to return, as we had come, by Aosta.

Mr. L— was anxious to reach Villeneuve as early as possible, to meet his carriage, and thinking that he could get on faster than "Nina" and the mule, he started off before us in company with Dr. Argentier. It is needless to say more than that we parted from him with great regret. He hired a porter to carry his knapsack, and wished very much to have a second porter to carry his bag of geological specimens, which had by this time assumed very formidable dimensions. The porter, however, insisted that he could carry both the bag of stones and the knapsack without difficulty. So away they trudged at a tremendous pace. We followed them shortly afterwards, leaving Cogne at

8.20 A.M. "Nina" and the mule appeared to be quite aware that they were going home, and when we started they went at such a brisk rate down the valley that in two hours we reached Vielle, where we had lunched on ascending. The good woman there recognised us as we passed, and greeted us cordially. We saw nothing, however, of our friend the eccentric curé, though we had anticipated having another gossip with him. All symptoms of the rain which had threatened us in the morning now disappeared; the mists dispersed, the sun shone forth, and the day finally turned out a very fine one. Not long after leaving Vielle I caught sight of Mr. L—, only a short distance in advance, and it was evident that we were gaining ground on him. The fact was, that his porter had found the scientific burden he had to bear rather weightier than he had supposed, and he could therefore only get along at a moderate pace. We walked rapidly on and soon overtook Mr. L—, to his great surprise; for he was under the impression that he was already a great way beyond us. We were delighted to meet once more, and exchanged mutual congratulations that we were to part under a brilliant though not cloudless sky, instead of under the murky atmosphere which had enveloped us at Cogne. We then went on together as far as the Pont d'Ael, where we had again to separate. At 12.15 P.M. H— and I reached the village on the right bank of the Doire, the bridge

across which would lead us once more into the Val d'Aosta; but before crossing this bridge we yielded to De la Pierre's suggestion of taking our lunch at the village which lies a little to the right hand of the road. We could not, however, be persuaded to enter the cabaret, where "Nina" and the mule were put up, and we took our seats a little out of the village upon some felled trunks of trees, beneath a canopy of trellised vines. But De la Pierre speedily found his way to the kitchen of the little inn, where he set himself busily to work, and soon made his appearance with an interesting-looking tray, covered with a white cloth, on which he carried a smoking hot poulet, a loaf of white bread, a bottle of Asti wine, and a heap of luscious peaches and fine grapes that might have gained a medal at a horticultural exhibition. A *carafe* of the coldest and clearest spring-water was a welcome addition, and we enjoyed our repast with that gusto which a journey of nearly four hours is sure to give. We had a long discussion as to whether we might not proceed to Châtillon along the right bank of the Doire, instead of crossing to the left bank and following the dusty high road which leads through the city of Aosta; but we found that it would take seven hours to accomplish this. We therefore abandoned the notion, and made the best of our way to Aosta, which we reached in an hour and a half. We drove thence to Châtillon in the cool of the evening, and found the air most refreshing and de-

licious. We went to our old quarters at the hotel "Palais Royal," which appeared quite an abode of luxury after the discomforts we had experienced at Cogne.

It was truly provoking that our expedition to the Grivola should have been unsuccessful, and that we should have brought back thence only the reminiscences of failure. Our attempt, however, was not unproductive of results, even among the unenterprising population of the valley, for it inspired M. Glarey, the curé of Cogne, to attempt the ascent, not of the mere Col of the Grivola which Mr. and Mrs. King attained, but of the very peak itself, upon the highest point of which no human foot has yet been known to tread. At three o'clock on the Monday morning which followed our departure from Cogne, M. Glarey, accompanied by a man named Jeantet, left Cogne, and at 9.30 A.M. reached the Col des Rayes-Noires. At noon they arrived at "La Pointe Blanche," where the Grivola, the object of their expedition, rose proudly and majestically before them. Here, tied together by a cord, and assisted by their alpenstocks and crampons, they ventured along the perilous surface of the snow. One of them, however, slipped and fell, and dragged the other after him to some distance, until by the joint aid of their crampons and finger-nails they contrived to stay their downward course on the slippery ice, grateful to Providence for having thus mercifully ensured their preservation. At

4.15 P.M. one of them, who we may infer to have been the curé, had reached the terminal slope which leads up to the highest point of the Grivola, and is, if the account be exact, only about 100 or 120 feet below it. Here a view unexcelled for sublimity and extent rewarded the exertions of the curé, who does not seem, however, to have attained the actual summit of the peak, though he succeeded in making this near approach to it. The return proved to be even more perilous than the ascent, the travellers were benighted, and at last the light of the moon alone guided them on their way. Overcoming frightful difficulties, they continued their journey downwards through the whole night, and it was not until 5 A.M. on the Tuesday morning that they returned to Cogne, after a continuous journey of twenty-six hours over mountains and glaciers. A full account of this expedition, which appeared in the 'Feuille d'Aoste' of 28th October, 1858, is given in the APPENDIX No. II.

In the same newspaper appears a letter from M. le Chanoine Carrel of Aosta, to whom the public are indebted for a valuable Panorama of the view seen from the Becca de Nona, or "Pic de Onze Heures," in which he states that the height of the Grivola above the level of the sea is 3964 mètres (12,982 feet), which is considerably higher than Monte Emilius and Monte Viso. The Grivola is consequently the highest peak of the Alps abutting on the plains of Piedmont, with the ex-

ception of Mont Iseran, which is 4045 mètres (13,490 feet).

But however wonderful may be the attractions of the Grivola, or the view from its Col, I would not recommend ladies to make the attempt we did, until some better hotel accommodation is provided at Cogne. It is some consolation to know that from the summit of the Becca de Nona, immediately opposite Aosta, there is a magnificent and, in many important respects, a nearer view of exactly the same country as that seen from the Grivola. It is inferior only in extent of prospect, but this is fully compensated for by the circumstance that by starting at an early hour from Aosta one can reach the summit, enjoy the view, and return to sleep at Aosta the same night. Even this expedition should not be undertaken except in fine and settled weather. If this indispensable advantage is enjoyed, no one who is acquainted with M. Carrel's Panorama can doubt about being more than satisfied with the magnificence of the view. At present, however, there are few persons at Aosta who are competent to act as guides to the traveller either to the Becca de Nona or the Grivola, and M. Carrel recommends travellers to seek guides and mules for the former mountain at Charvensod. Jean Tairraz himself admitted that he had never been to the Grivola, and that he had only once ascended the Becca de Nona. I trust that the interest which travellers are beginning to take in this wonderful district

may speedily produce a decided change, and that all who go to Aosta will think it as much a part of their duty to ascend one of these mountains as to go up the Flegère or Breven when at Chamounix.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE VAL TOURNANCHE AND THE PASS OF ST. THÉODULE.

Adieu to De la Pierre — A stroll up the Val Tournanche — The Roman aqueduct — The two grissan-eaters — Mont Cervin viewed from the Italian side — Description of the Pass of St. Théodule — Departure from Châtillon — Fort Bard — Pont St. Martin and Roman antiquities — Farewell to the mountains.

Sept. 19.—We had yet to explore the beautiful Val Tournanche, which leads from Châtillon to the Pass of St. Théodule, and obtain a view of the Italian side of Mont Cervin. We determined to accomplish that to-day by a quiet walk up the valley; and as we were on the morrow to turn our faces towards the cities of the south, we looked out with much anxiety for a fine morning and were not disappointed. The sun shone brilliantly, but a few clouds still hung on the highest mountain-tops. De la Pierre had arrived last night with "Nina" and the mule; and when we came down to breakfast he was in the courtyard of the inn, ready to place himself at our disposal for a journey up the Val Tournanche to Breuil, and from thence to the world's end if we wished it. For a short time we hesitated whether we should avail ourselves of this oppor-

tunity of passing by the Cimes Blanches into the Val d'Ayas, and thence, by the Betta Furka Pass, into the Val de Lys, down which we might then have proceeded to the Pont St. Martin; but we had been sadly disheartened by the failure of our expedition to Cogne, and we have found in the course of many visits to the Alps, that during the last ten days or so of the month of September, when the equinoctial gales prevail, the weather generally breaks and becomes stormy and unsettled. There is very often a great fall of rain about that time, which is succeeded in October by another period of fine weather. Having therefore no sufficient confidence at this critical period of the year to begin a new mountain excursion, we thought it prudent to decline De la Pierre's tempting offer, and we wished him good-bye, with a hearty good-will which I am sure he reciprocated.

After an excellent breakfast at the Hôtel Palais Royal, we started for a stroll up the Val Tournanche, lingering by the way to enjoy the grateful shade of the chestnut-trees which overhung the path, and stopping to examine every rock, tree, flower, and insect, that could beguile us on our way. The most remarkable object of all was the ruins of a Roman aqueduct, which extend at intervals for five or six miles up the valley. The Val Tournanche is in fact a mere defile, bounded on each side by perpendicular rocks. The aqueduct is at a short distance from the road, and immediately under the precipices

which bound it on the western side. It is sometimes several hundred feet above the bottom of the valley, and is built so close to the precipices that a great part of it appears to have been destroyed by avalanches of snow and falls of stones from the rocks above. In some places, however, it is still perfect, and rests upon arches which look, when viewed from the road, as if they were built into the very rock. The day was exceedingly hot, and the thirst we experienced led us to note the scarcity of springs throughout the course of several miles above Châtillon. It was only at one or two places, before we got to the end of the aqueduct, that we could find even the smallest trickling spring where a draught of pure water could be obtained. The torrent of the Tournanche was roaring below, but no one likes to drink the milky-looking glacier water, which is well known to be unwholesome. We felt considerable curiosity to trace the spot where the aqueduct would cease, and to note the place whence it derived, in ancient times, its supply of water. At last, at a distance of five or six miles above Châtillon, we came to a ravine on our left, down which leaped a cascade of the clearest spring water, which there finds its way into the Tournanche. The waters of this cascade were formerly intercepted by the aqueduct, and conveyed in unsullied purity to Châtillon. Whether crétinism and goître are properly attributable in any degree to drinking glacier-water, I cannot say; but it seems certain that the ancient Romans were deter-

mined, at any cost, to have a plentiful supply of the purest spring-water, and there is reason to regret that the people of the country have now become indifferent to what was once recognised as so important. On more than one occasion during our tour, and even at Alagna and Gressonay, the bottles on the table were filled with unmistakeable glacier-water; when we remonstrated they were taken away and presently brought back filled with the brightest and clearest spring-water, thus showing that the badness of the supply was sometimes attributable to indolence alone. We made a pause to admire the exquisite transparency of the stream which flowed from the cascade, and on drinking some we found it to be as excellent as it looked. Great as is the luxury of pure water, one could not but feel astonished that a stupendous work like the aqueduct should have been constructed merely for the purpose of conveying so small a supply to Châtillon.

In our walk up the valley we found on a stone wall one of the large bright green grasshoppers which are so numerous in this country, and stopped to examine it. As the creature did not attempt to escape, I very gently put my finger near it, which it immediately proceeded to investigate with its antennæ. Then I substituted a little piece of grissan, a fine white bread made in long sticks, and about the ordinary thickness of maccaroni. The grasshopper applied its antennæ to the grissan, and, the investigation proving satisfactory, its nippers

were speedily applied in the most vigorous manner, the clever little fellow at the same time steadying his booty with his fore-legs, so as to hold it fast. He soon made a large hole in the grissan, and did not exhibit the least fear, never for a moment ceasing to nibble whilst we were watching him. In the midst of this interesting operation three young peasants came up, and, observing how busily we were engaged, stopped to investigate the matter; when they saw what it was, they appeared surprised at the interest we took in so common a thing as a grasshopper. One of the young men was himself eating grissan, and his companions when they found that he and the grasshopper were similarly employed, made many jokes at his expense. Before we went on we placed a little pile of stones to mark the spot where we had left the grasshopper, but when we looked for it on our return both grasshopper and grissan were gone.

At Antey, some young men, who were enjoying a game at bowls, very eagerly tendered their services as guides to escort us across the St. Théodule Pass, but we declined their offer. Here we at last caught sight of the crest of Mont Cervin towering aloft in the sky, but the base was still hid in clouds. Shortly after passing the cascade we entered a small, level, grassy valley, which looks as if it had once been the bed of a lake, and soon afterwards we came to a little village where we quitted the mule-path which leads up to Val Tour-

nanche, and crossed to the left bank of the stream by a wooden bridge, which brought us to the foot of a hill where, on a height above, we saw a small wooden cross. We rightly guessed that if we made for this cross, it would bring us to a fine view. We followed the path up the hill, which at first led among huge, loose, round stones brought down by a torrent, but in about twenty minutes we had ascended higher than the point marked by the cross, and reached a group of small trees, principally birch. We found a nice, shady, retired spot beneath these trees, and we sat down there for about an hour and a half, watching Mont Cervin, over which masses of mist and vapour continually drifted, so that it never had the same appearance for two minutes together. It looked perhaps more sublime, when thus battling with the mists which strove to hide it, than it would have done had it stood in unclouded majesty. Below us the valley could be traced for miles winding its way up to the mountains, and the village of Val Tournanche, with its little dots of houses, formed an interesting feature in the landscape. The upper part of the valley presents, however, rather a bare appearance, though the lower portion near Châtillon is richly wooded. Mont Cervin is the great and sublime feature in the view, and as we sat enjoying a quiet Sunday in this secluded spot, and H— was reading to me the beautiful Liturgy of the English Church, I felt emotions which only those can understand who have had similar experience. There

stood the mighty Mont Cervin, pointing to heaven as an "imperishable spire" to our vast cathedral, of which the mountains formed the walls and the vaulted blue sky the roof. The clouds gradually cleared off, and before we left our resting-place there was an unobstructed view of the whole enormous mass of Mont Cervin lifting itself into the blue ether, and closing up the head of the valley with its majestic proportions.

The appearance of Mont Cervin when viewed from the Italian side is very different to that which it presents from Zermatt. It is not so symmetrical in form, nor are the elegant curves or "lines of beauty" which form its outline when viewed from the Schwartz See equally observable. Indeed it almost resembles a truncated pyramid, and suggests the idea of rugged, massive, unconquerable strength. There it stands with a strength "as of imperishable iron, rustless by the air, infusible by flame." Well may Mr. Ruskin, when he describes one of the small insignificant mica flakes which make up this wonderful structure, call it a strange type of the things which "out of weakness were made strong," and exclaim, "the great war of the firmament may burst in thunder and yet stir it not, and the fiery arrows and angry meteors of the night fall blunted back from it into the air."*

Mr. George Barnard's admirable drawing of this, the less known side, of Mont Cervin is taken from a point

* 'Modern Painters,' vol. iv.

MONT CERVIN.

(FROM ABOVE ZERMATT) SUNRISE.

above Breuil. It will be perceived, even by this drawing, that if Mont Cervin is ever ascended, it will probably be from the Italian side. The little mountain inn, called Auberge de Mont Jumont, lately opened at Breuil, now gives any adventurous traveller who is bent on such an undertaking, the opportunity of biding his time for favourable weather. I am told that some guides and hunters of the neighbourhood made an attempt this season (1858) from Breuil, but without success. They speedily reached perpendicular rocks up which no human being could climb, and were completely baffled.

At last, about 4.15 P.M., we were obliged to descend from our elevated resting-place, and retrace our steps to Châtillon, gathering many lovely wild flowers on the way, and turning to take our final leave of Mont Cervin at the spot where we had first seen it in the morning. We collected several pieces of rock, glittering with flakes of mica, and broke off a specimen of dolomite from a mass which had been brought down the valley by one of the streams. A young girl we overtook was driving her cattle home, and although her employment was very humble, her handsome face and figure attracted a fair share of admiration. When the sun ceased to shine into the depths of the valley we quickened our pace, and overtook a curé and a man leading a mule. They were talking together so energetically, that we fancied they must be quarrelling. We left them,

however, to settle their differences in their own way, and hurried on to Châtillon, where we arrived just before dusk, having, by way of a quiet, easy day, taken a walk of at least 15 miles. Such an undertaking would have been impossible for me to have accomplished at the beginning of our tour, but I was now in such excellent training that I felt no fatigue, and it increased my regret that we should have to quit the mountains just at the time when I had become so well fitted to enjoy them.

Although we have explored both sides of the St. Théodule Pass, we did not actually cross it, and this important part of the "Tour of Monte Rosa" would have been left imperfect, had I not, by the kindness of a friend, who is herself an experienced Alpine traveller, been supplied with a most interesting description of her adventures in crossing the Pass in the autumn of 1858. The following is her account:—

"At the close of the first week of August, 1858, we paid a second visit to Zermatt, our object being to cross the St. Théodule, and so reach the Italian valleys south of Monte Rosa. We had previously passed over the Monte Moro, but we were told that the St. Théodule was the finest of the higher Alpine passes, and was moreover readily accessible to ladies. Our guide was Alexandre Albrecht, an intelligent young man from Visp, who had been engaged for us by a tried friend, in whose judgment we had perfect confidence.

"The weather had been unsettled for some days previously, but now appearances were favourable, and we determined to start very early on the following morning, after a quiet Sunday spent at Zermatt. A large party were preparing for the same expedition, and after two o'clock little rest could have been enjoyed by any one in the hotel.

"We had been advised to ride for the early part of the journey,

and soon after three o'clock we mounted in very dim twilight: the morning was still, the stars shone brightly, and all seemed to promise a fine day. The path out of the village is the same as that leading to the Schwartz See, keeping along the edge of the noisy Zmutt torrent; then passing through woods and pastures, until it gradually rises above the valley. The first streaks of morning light soon appeared, the vapours which had veiled some of the higher summits vanished, and the huge pinnacle of Mont Cervin, or the Matterhorn, stood in unclouded majesty, looking wondrously grand and beautiful, against the deep blue sky. As we wound upwards, the 'hues of the rich unfolding morn' gradually lighted up the valley we were leaving, and new beauties opened every moment as rocks and snow caught the rays, and the distant range of the Oberland, with the nearer chain dividing the St. Nicholas from the Saas Valley, came into view. The Görner Glacier was below and in front of us, backed by the magnificent snow-clad summits, which gradually caught the rosy tints of the, to us, yet unrisen sun. Another party, consisting of a lady, with her husband and maid, now appeared winding up behind us. Several gentlemen, who had taken a shorter course from the Riffel, and, by crossing the glacier, found pleasanter walking across the pastures than by the rough and stony mule-path, also joined us, and we now formed a large and picturesque party, including the guides and requisite porters. On reaching a frail-looking bridge, just below the point where the torrent forms a pretty cascade, as it forces its way down the rocky mountain-side, we left our mules and walked the rest of the journey. After a rough ascent, during which we heard the shrill cry of the marmot from its hidden retreat, we reached an Alpine pasture, and, scrambling over stony ground, made slippery by the frost, which had converted the numerous watercourses into ice, the last ridge of rock before crossing the glacier was attained. Our fellow-travellers had continued on their mules to this point, but the footing for the poor animals was most insecure; and we rather pitied the lady's maid, who, evidently unaccustomed to riding, did not appear to enjoy her position, but looked resigned to circumstances, holding up a small parasol just before her eyes.

"The view was now most glorious. The Oberland mountains quite clear in the far distance; the quiet valley deep beneath us;

the prominent Dom, with the continuous range ending in the Weiss Thor, and Monte Rosa, in perfect, unclouded beauty, united by glittering summits to the vast snow-field which spread far beyond and around us, shut in on the other side by the huge crest of the Mont Cervin, which Ruskin so quaintly describes as 'lifting itself like a rearing horse, with its face to the east.' The glacier, although of course slippery, was in good order for walking: the sun had not yet melted its surface, which was crisp and sparkling with icy diamonds; the air was most exhilarating; but the glare became painful to those who had not provided themselves with veils, and one of the gentlemen gladly accepted a pair of wire spectacles, which had on the previous evening been thought a very needless provision.

"We had determined to make a comparatively short journey, and to rest at a new 'hôtel' close to the châlets of Breuil. Having, therefore, no object in hastening onwards, we fell behind the rest of the party, who were soon an interesting feature in our view, as they toiled up through the snow, which became softer and deeper, varied by occasional crevasses, of which they warned us by loud shouts, significant of danger. It had been arranged that the guides should bring ropes to attach us together, to prevent accident in case a snow-bridge should give way; and undoubtedly the precaution is prudent, if not absolutely necessary; but at the last moment it had been given up. Now wherever the snow looked treacherous, Alexandre carefully preceded us, sounding with his pole, and we followed in single file, each joining hand to hand. We were nearly three hours on the ice and snow, our course keeping to the left of the col we were to surmount. During the last half hour the ascent became steeper and more laborious, and for the first time during our Alpine wanderings I found my breath uncomfortably affected by the rarity of the air. Our little son, who accompanied us, did not suffer from this, and we attained the hut just below the summit, upwards of 11,000 feet above the sea, without having encountered any real difficulty.

"The view which met us was most splendid; the Italian side being quite clear from the vapours which so frequently obscure it, and the vast range of near and distant mountains stood forth against a brilliant sky. It was, I think, the finest scene, altogether, we had looked upon among the Alps, combining the near grandeur of such vast snowfields, the glittering beauty of the Breithorn, with its adja-

cent peaks, and the glories of Monte Rosa, with the stern and overpowering majesty of the Cervin, and the finest distances imaginable.

"Some excitement was caused and much sympathy awakened by seeing one of our porters floundering in the snow below; ultimately the poor man had an unpleasant tumble, which made us tremble for his load as well as himself, but no real mischief resulted, and in due time the basket arrived, and enabled us to refresh our energies. We enjoyed our provisions, seated in picturesque groups outside the hut, which, though doubtless a most welcome shelter in bad weather, offered no interior attractions. It is kept by an old man and his daughter. We afterwards climbed up the rock above the little building, and there quietly enjoyed the glorious scene, while our fellow-travellers more hurriedly continued their journey. Alexandre, however, soon warned us that the intense heat of the sun would materially affect our progress over the snow; and therefore, taking leave of the old man and his daughter in their lofty dwelling-place, we prepared for the descent. We now sank into the snow over our ankles at every step, and frequently above our knees, which made the walk fatiguing; but there was constant excitement in avoiding the crevasses, which make frequent détours necessary. In one place some former travellers had left a plank across a deep chasm; over another treacherous-looking fissure Alexandre placed our poles side by side to form a bridge, and give us a safe footing; then, breaking away the crust of snow which hung over the edges and concealed the danger, he told us to look down the narrow chasm, which, widened and extended to an unknown depth, was almost awfully beautiful, with huge glittering icicles pendent from the dark green sides. We thus partially realized the dangers of Alpine travellers, overtaken by fog or snow, where a single false step would be almost certain death.

"A course to the left may be taken to the Val d'Ayas and Brussone—our way to Breuil kept to the right, skirting the glacier at the base of the Cervin. At one moment we heard rushing water beneath the icy bridge we were evidently crossing, and, after about two hours' journey down through the snow, we reached a steep moraine, intersected with watercourses, which we descended, and rested some time at the remains of a cattle-shelter, below which were the pastures belonging to the châlets of Breuil. Here we again found the Forget-

me-not and other flowers, and, enjoying the pleasanter walking over the turf, we rapidly descended to the little Auberge de Mont Jumont, where we arrived at one o'clock. We found our fellow-travellers concluding their dinner, preparatory to starting for a walk on to Tournanche, in order to reach Châtillon that evening, undeterred by the warning they received of the probable difficulty of obtaining mules, upon which they depended. We in the meantime found good food, clean rooms, and great civility in this resting-place, which removes the only impediment to a lady's enjoyment of this most beautiful pass. In the evening a party of young men came in from Châtillon, intending to cross the col the next morning, and we were amused at their notion of getting breakfast and anything they wanted at the 'Pavillon' on the summit. The origin of such misplaced expectations was however explained the next morning, when we heard that their guide was the son of the old man 'en haut,' who had largely magnified the paternal powers of entertainment.

"After a good night's rest we found Alexandre had secured two mules to take us down the valley: one had come up from Châtillon in consequence of a message we had sent the day before; the other was 'a return,' and the owner was therefore glad to be hired. As no lady's saddle was procurable in the valley, a seat had to be improvised for me, by tying sacks of hay upon the wooden framework used for ordinary loads; and, although the appearance was uninviting, the seat was really tolerably comfortable when attained! I was elevated on a kind of sofa, with my feet resting in cord stirrups on either side of the mule's neck, and a red checked cloth having been thrown over the structure, the effect altogether must have been very picturesque. I did not, however, try it for some time, as we all preferred walking down the valley till after we had passed a fine waterfall, and a very remarkable defile where the river forces its way out of sight beneath the rocks. It is a savage-looking spot, and a fit locality for fierce encounters between the douaniers and smugglers, which Alexandre recounted. We saw only a solitary douanier, seated on the grass, who did not look very formidable. A steep descent leads into the Val Tournanche, which opens in great beauty. The morning was particularly pleasant for our journey, for there was sufficient cloud to shelter us from the sun;

indeed the Mont Cervin never emerged from mist and vapour, and it would to-day have been difficult and even dangerous to cross the pass, which we saw yesterday in such perfection.

"At Tournanche the only accommodation is a miserable 'caserne,' which nothing but dire necessity would induce one to enter. This is the frontier station of Piedmont, and passports are viséd at the cost of 3 f. apiece. The valley hence is very beautiful, varied by picturesque villages, the unusual colouring of the rocks giving a peculiar character to the scenery. We halted once at a wayside inn, where we amused the people by preparing a basin of excellent portable soup, which was very acceptable, as our breakfast had been most moderately provided. Our son then accompanied Alexandre on foot by a shorter cut than the mule-path, turning off just where, high up on the opposite side of the valley, the remains of a Roman aqueduct are visible. The last hour as you approach Châtillon is very beautiful, the road winding through groves of chestnut and walnut trees, with the picturesque town and lovely valley beyond. When we reached our journey's end, we found the pedestrians looking down from the gallery of the Hôtel du Palais Royal, with our fellow-traveller of the previous day, who had come on from Breuil with his wife and servant, arriving at half-past ten at night, after various accidents and much discomfort. They had required the whole morning to rest, and had therefore gained nothing but painful experience by their long journey, and had lost all the beauty of the valley and the approach to Châtillon. We slept here, but it is decidedly preferable to proceed to St. Vincent, if you can send on previously to secure rooms, which otherwise it is difficult to obtain during the season for the baths."

Sept. 20.—We left Châtillon this morning in an open calèche for Ivrea, on our way to Turin. It was a bright, warm day, but the mountains were not free from clouds. Our course was by an excellent carriage-road, down the lower end of the Valley of Aosta, which before reaching Fort Bard assumes the appearance of a gigantic defile. On a lofty rock in the centre of this defile stand

the fortifications of Fort Bard, which completely command it. It was here that Napoleon's army, after it had crossed the Great St. Bernard, was checked in its advance for eight days, although the fort was then but a very insignificant affair and garrisoned by only four hundred Austrians. The fortifications have now been vastly increased and strengthened; and I think we must have seen nearly four hundred persons busily engaged in finishing the works which are intended to make it impregnable. The ugly, dirty old village of Fort Bard is immediately under the guns of the fort, and the houses form one long, narrow, dark street, extending along a ledge of rock above the left bank of the Doire. The houses on the right-hand side of the street, next the river, hide from the fort all view of what is going on in the village, and as they are solidly though roughly built, they would still afford no contemptible shelter to an enemy who wished to steal by on a dark night. It was by a ruse of this kind that Napoleon got the principal part of his army through in 1800, and was able to reach Marengo and fight the great battle there; but the buildings which, by screening the French soldiers from the Austrians in the fort, facilitated his doing so, are still suffered to remain. If these buildings were demolished, their removal would not only enable the guns of the fort to command the passage more effectually, and even sweep it with grape-shot, but would greatly conduce to the healthiness and cleanliness

of the place, which much needs some strong remedy of that kind for its purification and improvement.

When we had passed Fort Bard and were gazing back at its picturesque position, perched aloft on an eminence in the centre of the defile, we were struck by what appeared to be the marks of glacier action on the rocks. Some of these rocks are so rounded and scratched that we felt a strong impression that in ancient times an enormous glacier must have covered all the ground on which Fort Bard now stands, and stretched itself into the valley below. We were not, however, able to make a minute investigation, and more scientific travellers must determine whether this impression is correct.

There are several interesting remains of antiquity in this part of the Valley of Aosta, particularly at Donas, where there is a Roman cutting in the rock and near it a Roman milestone, and also at Pont St. Martin, where there is an old Roman bridge in a very perfect state of repair, and a small Roman Column with an inscription. This bridge is a remarkable structure, consisting of a single lofty arch that spans the torrent of the Lys, which here falls into the Doire. The roadway over the arch is composed of large smooth slabs of stone, which are bare of all earth or covering, and seem to be undoubtedly Roman, but the masonry above the arch is evidently modern. As we stood on the bridge we looked wistfully at the entrance to the Val de Lys,

which, in a few hours, would have brought us again to Gressonay, in the very heart of that Alpine world which we were about to quit. On the opposite side of the valley could be seen the entrance of the Val de Champorcher, which leads to Cogne. At a short distance above Fort Bard is Verrex, where is the entrance to the Val de Challant, and from this place an easy journey of a few hours would take the traveller to Brussone. Pont St. Martin, which may be reached in one day from Turin, is therefore an admirable starting-point for those who intend to commence their Alpine wanderings in this neighbourhood; for they have there four most important routes from which to select, and all lead to scenery of the most wonderful character. There is also a very tidy little inn there, the Albergo Rosa Rossa. Pont St. Martin, however, was on this occasion destined to be our point of departure, and there we finally took leave of the valleys of Piedmont. Although we were about to visit the palaces of Genoa, and the galleries and churches of Florence and other cities of Central Italy, and to study there some of the most magnificent productions of human genius, it was not without a feeling of deep regret that we stood up in the calèche which conveyed us from Pont St. Martin, and once more looking back towards the mountains, gave our final farewell to the wonderful Alpine region of which Monte Rosa is the Queen.

CHAPTER XIX.

MODES OF MAKING THE COMPLETE TOUR OF MONTE ROSA.

The tour of sixteen days — The tour of ten days — Words of encouragement — Conclusion.

IT will be seen by the preceding pages that my Tour of Monte Rosa was made in a series of excursions and with many divergencies from the strict route to interesting points in the neighbourhood. But for the information of those travellers who may wish to know in what way and within what time the complete circuit of this beautiful mountain may be best made, the following observations are added.

The traveller who starts early in the morning from Leukerbad, Tourtemagne, or Brieg, may easily make the Tour of Monte Rosa, see what is most worth seeing, and return to the same point in about sixteen days, which should be thus employed:—

	Days.
From Leukerbad, Tourtemagne, or Brieg, to Saas	1
From Saas (including a visit to the Fée Valley) to Mattmarksee	1
From Mattmarksee over the Monte Moro to Macugnaga ..	1
Visit to the Belvedere and glacier of Macugnaga, Pedriolo, &c.	1
From Macugnaga to Ponte Grande, a walk of only four hours	1

	Days.
From Ponte Grande, over the Baranca Pass, to Fobello ..	1
From Fobello to Varallo; visit to the Sacro Monte and the Monte dei Tre Croci	1
From Varallo to Alagna	1
Excursion from Alagna to the Pile Alpe, Val di Bors and Glacier	1
From Alagna, by the Col d'Ollen, to Gressonay	1
Excursion from Gressonay to the Lys Glacier	1
From Gressonay, by the Col de Ranzola and the Col de Jon, to Châtillon	1
From Châtillon to Breuil	1
From Breuil over the St. Théodule to Zermatt	1
Excursion from Zermatt to the Riffelberg and Görner Grat	1
Return from Zermatt to Visp, and thence, in a carriage, to Brieg, or Tourtemagne	1
	16

The pedestrian who is pressed for time and feels himself capable of enduring more fatigue than is suitable to a lady, may shorten the above tour to only ten days as follows:—The visit to the Fée valley may be dispensed with, and Mattmarksee reached on the first night. The visit to the Belvedere and the descent to Ponte Grande may also be compressed into one day; but the glacier excursion and Pedriolo must in that case be given up. The traveller may even in one day cross the Moro from Mattmarksee, and sleep at Ponte Grande. The journey from Ponte Grande to Varallo may also be made in one day. The traveller may visit the Sacro Monte early the next morning, and reach Alagna in the evening, having previously ordered a carriage to be in readiness to take him from Varallo to Piode. I have already mentioned that the excursion

to the Pile Alpe and Val di Bors, and thence, by the Col d'Ollen, to Gressonay, may be accomplished in one long day. The excursion from Gressonay to the Lys Glacier may also be omitted.

A fortnight would be really ample time for making the tour without any deviation from the direct route, and allowing a fair margin for days of rest and bad weather.

Tourists who are able to devote sufficient time for the excursion would, however, do well, when at Varallo, to cross by the Col de Colma to Pella and Orta, and enjoy an evening on the lake; then on the next day ascend the Monte Monterone, and sleep at Omegna; then return to Varallo by crossing the mountains from Omegna to Camasco. They should also, when at Châtillon, drive up the valley of Aosta to Courmayeur, to see the southern side of Mont Blanc, and either ascend the Mont de Saxe from that place, or the Cramont from St. Didier. They should also, when at Aosta, ascend the Becca de Nona; but I cannot recommend an excursion to Cogne until better accommodation is provided there.

Gentle Readers! before taking my leave, let me assure you that it requires neither very great strength nor a very dauntless spirit to make the Tour I have described. I feel certain that any lady, blessed with moderate health and activity, who is capable of taking a little

exercise "al fresco," and has a taste for the picturesque and sublime, may accomplish the Tour of Monte Rosa with great delight and few inconveniences, and all who do so must bring back with them a store of delightful recollections for the solace of future years. Two or three hours in the badly-ventilated rooms of a crowded picture gallery will generally produce a feeling of more thorough fatigue than a journey over an eight-hours' pass in the pure, invigorating mountain air. At the same time I would caution any lady against suddenly undertaking a prolonged and difficult expedition, in which long walks are sometimes unavoidable, without some previous training. The exertion of riding and walking for several hours together should be undergone experimentally a few days before, beginning with only easy days' excursions, and gradually accomplishing more as the capability of doing so with pleasure increases. I trust that the information contained in this book will be found of practical use to travellers, and induce many to visit the beautiful district I have endeavoured to describe. Should this be the case, my object will be gained; and I conclude by wishing that all who attempt the Tour of Monte Rosa may be fortunate enough to find and enjoy there

> "The greenest bowers, the most inviting ways,
> The fairest landscapes, and the brightest days." *

* Wordsworth.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

(See page 206.)

—o—

PASS OF THE NEW WEISS THOR, FROM THE RIFFEL (ZERMATT) TO MAÇUGNAGA.

[Communicated by the REV. T. G. BONNEY.]

LAST autumn I visited the Riffel in company with a friend, Mr. J. C. Hawkshaw, our intention being to spend one or two days there, and then cross into the Val Anzasca by the Weiss Thor Pass. We employed the 1st of September in a visit to the Görner Grat, and a ramble over the Hochthäligrat. There is perhaps no view in Switzerland which is at once so magnificent and so easily obtained as that from the Görner Grat. The great glacier is at your feet; the Mont Cervin, or Matterhorn, Breithorn, Lyskamm, and Monte Rosa, with many minor peaks, rise from an ocean of ice, as distinctly visible as if only a mile off; the magnificent masses of the Mischabel-hörner and Weisshorn look as if at no great distance; while the view down the Zermatt valley is terminated by some of the peaks of the Oberland chain. We were fortunate in having a brilliant day and glorious sunset. There was, however, something in the look of the sky which foreboded change, and we accordingly made arrangements for starting early on the morrow. I woke up about 3 A.M., and, when about half dressed, was greeted with the pleasant message, "Le guide dit que le temps est trop mauvais pour le Weiss Thor." However, as there was a chance of its

mending, we finished dressing and got some breakfast. In about an hour better symptoms appeared, and, finally, we set off about 5 A.M., just as it was getting fairly light. It certainly did not look a very promising day, but, as we were anxious not to lose time, we determined to make the attempt, although a guide, who, judging from his *bâton*, had been up every mountain in the neighbourhood, told us we should have to come back. Our party was joined by an Englishman, with two guides, who intended either to accompany us, or else, if the weather improved, to attempt Monte Rosa. Our road at first followed the path to the Görner Grat, but afterwards diverged towards the glacier. A dull mass of clouds hid the upper parts of the Matterhorn and other mountains, and shut out from us the beauties seen on the day before. Close to us was the extraordinary peak of the Riffelhorn. It reminded me of a picture I once saw of some Eastern ruins, I think of the Temple of Belus, for it is a pyramidal pile of broken rocks, crowned by a square mass, which resembles a ruined keep. We had, on the evening before, scrambled to the foot of this horn, but had been completely foiled in our endeavour to ascend it, by the smooth, glazed wall of serpentine. Subsequently my friend and another of our party scaled the opposite side (that facing Monte Rosa), and reached the summit after some difficulty.

The path to the Weiss Thor leaves the Riffelhorn to the right, and runs along the face of the cliff above the Görner Glacier, gradually descending to it. This path would not do for a bad head, being very narrow in several places, where a slip would probably send you rolling down to the glacier some two hundred feet below. The cliff is formed of mica schist, which in many places is full of small garnets. The sun rose while we were walking along it, but the clouds robbed us of the splendid view we ought to have had. Soon after a dull booming sound came from the other side of the glacier, and on looking in that direction we saw a huge avalanche dart out from the clouds, and stream like a cataract down the sides of the Lyskamm. At last we reached the glacier, when our companion and his two guides held a consultation upon the weather, the result of which was that they determined to attempt Monte Rosa. It required some self-denial to resist the temptation to accompany them, but we felt so much doubt of their success on such a day that we kept to our own

expedition. It was fortunate that we did so, for we afterwards heard that they lost their way in a mist and had to return. We walked on rapidly over the glacier, keeping near the side, where there were no crevasses of any size, and a thin coating of snow gave capital footing. The only living thing we saw was a marmot, which scampered rapidly away among the rocks at the hoot of our guides.

After walking a good distance along the glacier, we returned to the rocks and kept to them for some time. The weather still looked very sulky, the clouds obstinately hanging over the region where our road lay: we therefore only made a brief halt while we took a second edition of breakfast, just before quitting the rocks again. The snow here was soft and deep, so that we were obliged to walk in single file, treading in the steps of the first man, to avoid sinking in up to the knees. The mist soon afterwards rolled down upon us and hid everything. We walked on and on, tramping through the snow, guided by some half obliterated tracks, but knowing very little where we were going. Once or twice the mist lifted for a minute or two, and showed us billowy plains of snow, with here and there a black crag peering out. Once a glacier, I suppose the Findelen, was visible on our left. At another time we passed close by the foot of a huge crag of ice, the débris from which covered our path, and suggested how unpleasant it would be should any detached pieces fall just at the wrong moment. Now and then a great crevass was passed, with the snow wreathing over its edges and huge icicles hanging down into its blue depths. This blue tint of the ice is most beautiful, and may be seen to a greater or less degree in every glacier. Generally there is a green tinge in glaciers, but occasionally, as in the Glacier of Rosenlaui, the greenness is entirely absent. This colour may also be seen in the snow anywhere in the Alps, by making a hole with the *bâton* a few inches in depth.

The extremities of these crevasses are often covered with snow, and the snow bridges thus formed are sometimes dangerous. The guide who was walking in front of me had a narrow escape; the snow broke suddenly under him, and let one of his legs through a snow bridge, but he recovered himself directly. Our guides were evidently puzzled about the route, and grumbled very much at the mist which, as they said, "wouldn't let a man see." Our feelings at this time were anything but pleasant, especially when a few flakes

of snow fell. Had it come on to snow heavily and obliterate our tracks before we could regain the rocks, our position on that wide snow plain would have been very perilous, to say nothing of the risk of walking over into Piedmont with a single step, a thing by no means impossible in a fog.* At last, just when we began to feel most hopeless of success, the mist lifted a little and showed us a black crag, only a few hundred feet distant, which the guides at once hailed as the wished for landmark, that pointed out the summit of the pass. Two or three minutes more brought us to the edge of the precipice, when a halt was unanimously agreed on; for after a four hours' trudge through the snow, we were quite ready for rest and refreshment. As snow does not afford an agreeable seat, we selected a place on the face of the precipice, where we established ourselves, unpacked our provisions, and feasted. It certainly was a queer dining-room; the cliff was broken into a series of narrow ledges,† on which we were perched like gulls, seated on one ledge and resting our feet on a lower one, with our provisions dispersed around us in any available cranny that might prevent their rolling down as impromptu *avant couriers* to announce our approach. The mist prevented any distant view, but nevertheless a more wonderful scene cannot be imagined—we seemed to rest on a little island in mid air. To the left, a buttress of the rock closed in the view; to the right, we looked along a dark, rough precipice, the continuation of that on which we were seated; this was capped with a layer of snow and ice many feet thick, and looked, if one may venture on the comparison, like a slice of gigantic wedding cake. Against this cliff and at our feet the mist boiled and ascended, and the curling wreaths swept up to and past us, like the steam from a huge caldron. Dinner over, we returned to the snow and tied ourselves together with a long rope; then after a short scramble, as best we could, up the steep icy slope, we took to the face of the precipice, a few feet above the spot where we had dined. We now began to scramble along the ledges, at first keeping nearly on the same level and then descending rapidly. It was an unpleasant looking place, the ledges being seldom wider than just enough to

* *Vide* Hinchliff's 'Summer Wanderings in the Alps,' p. 149.

† Of mica schist.

give good support to one foot at a time, and the cliff so steep that, if once started, it would be very difficult to stop your downward career in a fall. The rope, however, though often a great nuisance, is, when used, an important safeguard, because with common care no accident can then happen, for if one of the party slip, the rest can readily hold him up till he recover his footing.

We scrambled on, till, after perhaps half an hour, we once more saw snow below us, and speedily descended upon the remarkable spot from which the Weiss Thor derives its name. This is a great bank of snow, very steep, and shaped like the roof of a house—as though a triangular prism of snow were placed, in a leaning position, against the precipice. The pitch of the two sides is not the same: one is nearly perpendicular to the base—the other has about the ordinary slope of a house-roof. Along this latter side we descended, keeping so close to the ridge, that our *bâtons* frequently pierced through it, and came out on the other side. It was so steep a descent, that great care was needed to avoid slipping; but as the snow was very soft, there was no difficulty in getting secure footing. The mist still hid everything from us, and perhaps here it was just as well, for I suspect that our position, could all its dangers have been seen, would have looked rather critical. At last the snow was terminated by steep rocks, which compelled us to turn rather to the left, where alone a descent was practicable. A long clamber down the cliffs now commenced, varied with short snow slopes. There was no regular path, but we had to halt occasionally and pick out the most promising line of descent. For a while we kept near to a glacier, which now and then appeared through the mist on our left. Sometimes we crossed rough moraines—at others the rocks were smoothed and rounded as though by ancient glacial action. The last snow-slope was very soft, and I had only taken a few steps on it when my foot sank deep, and my boot got so fairly filled with snow that I had to scrape it out. Directly afterwards I felt the rope tighten round my waist, while a shout from my friend called my attention to his predicament. His leg had sunk in so deep, that before he could draw it out, the tightening rope had pulled him so far over as to deprive him of all power, and plant him thigh-deep in the snow. Not long after passing this place we halted on a rough

bank of loose rock, and took off the rope, all the difficulties of the route being now accomplished. Here, beside a spring, we rested awhile, and finished off our provisions. Soon after this the mist began to separate, and gave us glimpses of the Macugnaga Glacier and the valley far below. As we descended the smooth pastures we got splendid views, the effect being enhanced by the rolling masses of cloud which now were rapidly ascending. The glacier is here seen spread out from one end to the other like a map; four great streams of ice unite and pour down into the valley, not filling it up entirely, but passing along the middle, the medial and great lateral moraines making it look like a huge railway. We rapidly descended, enjoying the views and the improved weather, and reached the "Hôtel Mont Moro" at Macugnaga about 4 P.M. Though we had had no sunshine while on the snow, yet our faces were a good deal scorched. The attentive landlord made us very comfortable, and a fine evening view of Monte Rosa somewhat compensated us for our loss of scenery during the day. We amused ourselves with tracing, by the aid of a glass, the route by which we had descended. Though the road is not really difficult, yet it looks from Macugnaga such an impracticable precipice, that its discoverer must have been a bold man. In fine weather the views ought to be magnificent, and in spite of the mist I do not regret having made the excursion, and can well recommend it to any one desirous of seeing what the snow-fields are really like. A steady head is, however, a *sine quâ non*; for in one or two places the consequences of an attack of dizziness might be very serious. Our guides, I should mention, were Stephann zum Taugwald and Franz Kronig, and I can heartily recommend them.

There is another route which comes from the Saas Thal, and at the summit of the Pass joins the one we followed. Sometimes this is used as a route to the Riffel from Mattmarksee, and as there is (as I am told) a horizontal narrow ridge of snow to be passed, is also called the Weiss Thor Pass. In many maps the Weiss Thor is marked between the Cima di Jazzi and Monte Rosa: this is the old Weiss Thor, and is distinguished in Studer's map as "Alter Pass." But the pass by which we crossed is on the north side of the Cima di Jazzi, and it is the only one now used.

Professor Forbes in 1841 could only find that the Old Weiss

Thor had been crossed once in the memory of men then living; but he adds that in 1854 it was crossed by at least one Englishman.* In the atlas to Schlagintweit's 'Neue Untersuchungen,' &c. (see *Taf.* xi.), there is a beautiful coloured drawing of this almost inaccessible "Alter Pass," and it is the only one marked in the map to that work.

No. II.

(See page 369.)

PREMIÈRE ASCENSION AU PIC LA GRIVOLA.

Vingt-six heures de promenade continue sur les montagnes et les glaciers.

Partis de Cogne à 3 h. du matin du 21 septembre p. p., MM. C. et J. arrivèrent au Grand-Lauzon à 6 h. Après un léger restaurant que leur offrirent gracieusement les généreux pâtres biellais qui exploitent cette montagne, ils repartirent en suivant le sentier des Fonds-de-Lauzon. A 8 h. et demie, ils étaient aux Rayes-Noires au pied de la pointe Rousse, et à 9 h. et demie, ils avaient surmonté le glacier des Rayes-Noires, et se trouvaient sur le col de ce nom, qui donne passage sur la montagne de Leviouna à Valsavaranche. Passé ce col, ils côtoyèrent les vastes ravins de Leviouna jusqu'à l'arête qui sépare cette montagne de celle de Bouconère; puis, suivant à peu près cette arête, ils dominèrent à midi la pointe Blanche. La Grivola, but de leur course, se présentait devant eux fière et majestueuse. Alors commença à se dérouler à leurs yeux un vaste panorama; mais le temps était précieux, il fallait avancer et non contempler. Un dos-d'âne, que les glaces rendaient tranchant, les séparait encore de toute sa longueur, de ces petits pics

* 'Tour of Mont Blanc and of Monte Rosa,' p. 286.

échelonnés entre Cogne et Valsavaranche, et qui semblent servir de marches pour monter à la Grivola. Il fallait le longer, et opter entre le talus septentrional et le talus méridional. Le premier leur faisait voir des précipices affreux sous leurs pieds et les crevasses béantes du Trajo, l'autre était une paroi de glace longue d'environ un kilomètre, mais sans crevasse; quelques centimètres d'une neige trompeuse qui couvrait cette glace, les engagèrent à choisir ce côté. S'étant attachés l'un et l'autre aux bouts d'une longue corde, un bâton pointu à la main, et les crampons aux pieds, ils avancèrent dans cet état à pas bien comptés. Au bout de quelques mètres, la neige diminua d'épaisseur, les crampons n'avaient plus de prise, il fallut rétrograder. Délibérer, examiner, et descendre quelques pas, fut l'affaire de cinq minutes. Là, quelques rocs proéminents venaient effleurer de distance en distance la surface de la glace, et leur faire croire à un passage facile. Mais quelle ne fut pas leur illusion? car la neige qui couvrait traîtreusement la glace, avait à peine un décimètre d'épaisseur, et pendant que l'un se cramponnait des pieds et laissait se dérouler entre ses mains la corde légèrement bandée, l'autre avançait lentement jusqu'au bout de la corde; alors celui-ci se tenait ferme et attendait son compagnon qui suivait ses traces. Ils côtoyèrent ainsi quelques hectomètres sans accident, lorsque, le premier ayant atteint un roc et s'y tenant appuyé pour attendre le second, celui-ci glisse et roule; le premier s'élance et tombe aussi, ils s'arrêtent tous les deux! . . . Ils admirent la protection spéciale de la Providence qui les retient sur la glace vive, sans autre moyen que leurs crampons et leurs ongles. Cependant leur courage n'est point abattu, mais leur prudence devient plus circonspecte. Encore une heure de cette marche pénible, et ils sont hors de péril. C'est 3 h. après midi, loin de penser à descendre, ils redoublent d'ardeur à la vue du pic qui domine leur tête et semble les inviter à faire encore quelques pas pour satisfaire leurs désirs. Ils gravissent des ravins, des rochers escarpés, et à 4 h. ¼, l'un d'eux était sur le dernier pic qui sert d'échelon à la Grivola, de 30 à 40 mètres au-dessous de celle-ci. Quelles émotions, quels sentiments sublimes dans ce moment solennel! Impossible de les décrire. Il est bien juste le proverbe latin: *Qui nescit orare ascendat montes.* Son premier soin fut d'entonner le *Te Deum;* la Grivola a entendu ce chant pour la première fois, et l'a répété à sa manière. Quel est le

00088578

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 10 March, 2016